

The EFFICACY
Of the fear of HELL,

To restrain Men from

SIN.

Shewed in a
SERMON

Before the Inferiour COURT in
NORTHAMPTON, Decem. 3d, 1712.

Together with the Benefit of the Gospel,
to those that are wounded in Spirit.

Shewed in several SERMONS, from
Luke 4th. 18, 19.

On the Occasion of a more than Ordinary
pouring out of the

Spirit of GOD.

By Solomon Stoddard,
Pastor of Northampton.

BOSTON in New-England:

Printed by Thomas Fleet, for Samuel
Phillips, at the Three Bibles and Crown
in King-Street, 1713.

god A^d first made man up
Right And he made man
Capable to doe his will
by the first
Adam 2^d Adam by his fall
men liable to sin and to
cry 3^d god by the second
ad made man Capable of
obtaining Salvation

All men shod pray with out
feacing 4th look for them
And others And that god would
originate him self in the sal
on of sinners

James Syme

James Syme
and I hope it
will be profitable
book

(3)

THE EFFICACY

Of the Fear of

HELL,

To restrain Men from

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Job 31. 23.

Destruction from God was a Terrour to me.

IN the foregoing Verses Job makes a solemn Protestation of his Innocency And Ver. 22. utters a terrible Imprecation against himself in case he was guilty. *Then let mine Arm fall from my Shoulder-blade, and mine Arm be broken from the Bone. And in this Verse he gives the reason*

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son why he did not carry himself Wickedly. *Destruction from God was a Terrour to me.*

In the Words mind, 1. How Job was affected. *Terrour* notes great Fear: *Destruction from God* was Terrible to him. 2. With what he was affected. *Destruction from God: Heb. of God.* The Genitive Case noting the Efficient, not the Subject.

Q. How came Job to be afraid of *Destruction from God*, seeing he was not only a good Man, but, as appears by many Passages of this Book, had the assurance of his Salvation?

A. There be Temporal Destructions that good Men are in danger of. The Destruction of their Estates, of their Children, and of their Lives. If they carry it Rebelliously, they have no security that such Destruction shall not come upon them. 2. Godly Men have reason to be afraid of Hell. Only here distinguish there is a Slavish fear of Hell, rising from a sence that Men are in a state of Condemnation. Thus they should not fear Hell. And there is a Cautious fear of Hell: That makes them to avoid those Paths that lead to Hell. This ought to be in godly Men, that conditional Proposition is true of godly Men. *Rom. 8. 13, If you live after the Flesh,*

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Flesh, you shall die. And therefore godly Men should have an Awful fear of Hell, and a due care to avoid it. Mat. 10. 28. *Fear Him that can cast both Soul and Body into Hell:* It is a laudable Thing for godly Men to fear Hell. •

Doctr. *The fear of Hell is a powerful Restraint from Sin.* There are such strong Inclinations in Men to Sin, and so many Temptations, that the World would be more wicked than the old World, were there not something that had considerable power to restrain Men, and a principal Thing to restrain Men is the *fear of Hell.* There be several other Things that are of use to restrain Men, as the fear of the displeasure of Parents, of the justice of Rulers, of Divine Vengeance in this World, but the fear of Hell is much more powerful than these. The misery of many Men is, that they do not fear Hell, they are not sensible of the dreadfulnes or danger of Damnation, and so they take a great liberty to Sin: But if they were afraid of Hell, they would be afraid of Sin, When their Lusts were as Spurs to stir them up to Sin, this fear would be as a Bridle to curb them in. Men are informed in the Scriptures of the

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Miseries of Hell on purpose to debar them from Sin; *Mat. 5. 29, 30. If thy right Eye offend thee pluck it out, and cast it from thee, for it is profitable for thee, that one of thy Members should Perish, and not that thy whole Body should be cast into Hell.* And if Men be thoroughly afraid of Hell, it will have that effect upon them, to restrain them from Sin.

Q. How is the fear of Hell a powerful Restraint?

A. The fear of Hell discovers the dangerous Nature of Sin. Hell is threatned in the Scripture as the punishment of Sin; Mat. 13. 41, 42. They shall gather out of his Kingdom all things that offend, and them that do Iniquity, and cast them into a Furnace of Fire. Sinful carriages bring Destruction; hence the Man is afraid of Sin, as that which will sink him into Hell. Men are afraid of Poyson and the Plague, because they think they will kill them; so they dread Sin, as that which will destroy them: Though they love it, yet they dare not practise it, because of the doleful Consequence of it. They say they shall bring a Curse upon themselves: They see Death in it; hereby they see an unanswerable Argument against

Sin.

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Sin. A Man saith as he, *If I should Sin, I should work falsehood against my own Life.* 2. Sam. 18. 13, This makes the Temptations to Sin to loose their Power. Men are urged to Sin for their Profit; but they say, what Profit shall I have if I be Damned? Math. 16. 26. *What is a Man profited if he gain the whole World and loose his own Soul?* They are urged to Sin for their Pleasure; but they say, we shall have Pain instead of Pleasure. Prov. 5. 4, 5. *Her end is bitter as Wormwood, sharp as a two-edged Sword. Her Feet go down to Death, her steps take hold of Hell.* They are urged to Sin for their Honour; but they say, This is the way to bring our selves to Shame. Dan. 12. 2. *Some shall rise to Shame and everlasting Contempt.*

2. *The fear of Hell helps Men to see somewhat of the baseness of Sin.* When Men are afraid of Hell, they are thereby made sensible of the terrible Anger of God for Sin; and may rationally conclude that Sin is an exceeding great Evil. If it were not, God would not be so angry as to send Men to Hell on that account. Would God inflict eternal Punishment for it, if the Evil of it were not exceeding great? There is a great deal of Light in Hell-Fire, discovering that

Sin must needs be an abominable Thing; if we should see Persons burnt at a Stake under a righteous Government, we should conclude that they had been guilty of horrible Crimes. So in this Case; Besides when Men are afraid of Hell, that leads them to consider the Nature of Sin; it brings them into a ponderous frame of Spirit, and makes them to weigh Things more Judiciously, and when they do so, though they have only natural Conscience, yet they may perceive a great deal of Filthiness in evil Carriages. They can easily discern that there is in their sinful Carriages a great deal of Folley, much corrupt Affection and Filthiness, and baseness against the light of Nature, Natural Conscience doth condemn many Sins, Rom. 2. 15.

3. *The fear of Hell helps Men to see what Practices are Sinful.* When Men are not afraid of Hell, many times they don't suspect many of their sinful Practices; and if they be told that they are Evil, they stand up in the Justification of them, and have a great deal to plead for them. It is almost impossible to convince them, but if the terrour of Hell take hold upon them, they will easily fall under Conviction, that many things

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things are amiss, which formerly they saw no Evil in. Conscience is enlightened, and they are sensible of their danger; *Now the Word is as a sharp two-edged Sword*, Heb. 4. 12. They dare not give way to a cavilling Spirit as before, they consider the rule more Impartially than they did; they know that Figleaves and sorry Pretences and Excuses will not serve their turn when God shall judge them, and they condemn such things as they justified before.

I *USE.* See the Reason why there is so little Reformation in this Land. This Work of Reformation has been mightily clogged, and a very little Matter has been effected; the Countrey hath been prosperous in other Designs: There hath been an indeavour to promote Cloathing, and it hath been prospered; so there has been a design to promote Learning and Merchandize, and there hath been Success; but there have been great endeavours to promote Reformation; Laws have been enacted, Sermons have been preached, Covenants have been made, but all endeavours have had a miscarrying Womb; there has not been one Sin generally reformed these twenty Years. Instead of growing better and better, the Country grows

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grows worse and worse. Many seem to be Incorrigible and Obstinate in their Pride and Luxury and Profaness: The reason of it is, they are not afraid of Hell; they are afraid of Poverty, and afraid of Sicknes, but not afraid of Hell; that would restrain them from sinful Practices, Destruction from God would be a Terrour to them.

1. *Fear of Punishment from Men, will not make the Land Reform.* The fear of Man is of considerable Use: Were it not for this, the World would be far more wicked than it is: They that don't love Vertue, fear Punishment: Rulers are a *Terrour to Evil doers*, Rom. 13. 4. The benefit of Government in this respect is very great, but will not make the Land Reform, for abundance of the Sins that bring down the Wrath of God upon the Land, don't fall under the Cognizance of Authority. There is a great deal of Pride and Murmuring and Worldliness, and prophaning of the Sabbath, that is not punishable by Law. The Laws of Men reach more gross Iniquities; but there are many Transgressions that are breaches of the Laws of Men. Parents may fail extreamly of their Duty, so may Officers in the Church and Com-
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monwealth, yet no Law take hold of them; there may be abundance of Iniquity found by God among a People, who are yet Innocent in the eye of the Law.

2. *Experience of publick Judgments will not make them to Reform.* Publick Judgments are monitors of Obedience; God speaks audibly and sensibly in them; and sometimes they have an Efficacy on the Consciences of Men. *Psal. 78. 34, 35. When He slew them, then they sought Him, &c.* But many times the Physick is not strong enough for the Disease: Judgments destroy their outward Comforts, but don't destroy their Sins. *Cleanness of Teeth won't cleanse away their Sins. Am. 4. 6.* The Barrenness of the Land won't make them Fruitful, *V. 9.* The Pestilence won't cure the Plague of their Hearts, *V. 10.* When they were scorched with Fire from Heaven, their Consciences were seared, *V. 11.* *Ten Plagues were not sufficient to work upon Pharoah.* Judgments won't deliver a People from their hard Hearts. *Jer. 5. 3. Thou hast stricken them, but they have refused to receive Instructions; they have made their Faces harder than a Rock, they have refused to Return.* Sometimes Judgments make People worse; many times Men

Men are not convinced what Judgments come for, and when they are past, they are soon forgotten: Men had rather bear a pretty deal than part with their Sins.

3. *Fear of Shame among Men will not make them Reform.* Sinful Carriages are a Shame to Men. When Men Sin, they degrade themselves, and act beneath the dignity of their Nature. Sin is unreasonable, and shews a baseness of Spirit; it brings a *Reproach upon a People*, Prov. 14. 34. And hence some particular Persons are affected with it, and scorn to make themselves a Reproach. They are not willing to be as the Fools in *Israel*, and so avoid those Sins that bring Ignominy. But when a People are become Corrupt, many sinful Practices are not counted Shameful. Many things that are Provocations to God are vindicated; the commonness of a Practice makes it to be accounted Lawful. Men may practise things that are provoking to God, yet live in Reputation among Men; they may be accounted Saints, they may be advanced to places of Honour, yea sometimes among a corrupt People, that which is indeed a Shame, is counted an Honour, and they glory therein. Phil. 3. 19. *Whose Glory is in their Shame.*

See full Good Counsel
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4. *Sense of Mercies and Deliverances will not.* A corrupt People are wont to have much Mercy mingled with Judgment, and sometimes God gives great Deliverances to them: These things should lead Men to Repentance, and sometimes they are much affected with the goodness of God. God's Mercies melt their Hearts, and they promise to amend their Ways; but such things seldom make a People Reform. After a while the Pang is over, and they forget the goodness of God. *Psal. 106. 12, 13. They sang his Praise, but soon forgot his Works. V. 21. They forgot God their Saviour, that had done great things for them.* The thoughts of the Deliverance grow a stale thing after a while, and they loose the sense of God's Mercies; yea the Mercies that God bestows upon them prove a Snare to them. If God bestows Plenty on them, they grow more Covetous, and the more they have the more they crave; he that loveth Silver will not be satisfied with Silver, and they swell with Pride, and forget their dependance upon God, and think much to be controuled. *Prov. 30. 9. Lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? And many times they grow Voluptuous, and live*

live the lives of *Epicures*. Am. 6. 4, 5, 6. *They lie upon Beds of Ivory, and stretch themselves upon their Couches; they eat the Lambs out of the Flock, and Calves out of the midst of the Stall; they chant to the Sound of the Viol, and invent to themselves Instruments of Musick, like David; they drink Wine in Bowls, and Anoint themselves with the chief Ointments.*

2. We see hence, *it would be a great benefit to many Men, if they had more of the fear of Hell.* It is worthy our Observation, That of all the Preachers that we Read of in the Scriptures, none was so frequent in warning the People to avoid Hell, as JESUS CHRIST; He was often telling them of their Danger, and perswading them, if it were possible, to avoid Damnation. Sometimes He tells them, *That the Chaffe shall be burnt up with unquenchable Fire;* Sometimes that it is better to enter into Life with one Eye, than *having two Eyes to be cast into Hell-Fire:* Sometimes of their being cast into a *Furnace of Fire, where there is Wailing and gnashing of Teeth.* Sometimes he asks the Scribes how they could escape *the Damnation of Hell?* Sometimes He minds His hearers of the Sentence that shall be pronounced

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ed on the Wicked at last, viz. *Depart from me ye Cursed into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* From hence we may learn, That the Consideration of the Pains of Hell, is singularly Useful for the promoting of Holiness, and it would be greatly beneficial to carnal Men, if they had more of the fear of Hell; it would make them more Solemn, more Prayerful, more loose from worldly Enjoyments, and more cautious how they did behave themselves. And it would be a great benefit to godly Men, if they had more of the fear of Hell; it would help them against a Lukewarm and Slumbering Spirit, and strengthen their Hearts against many Temptations that they are wont to be outbid by. *Job 31. 33. Destruction from God was a Terror to me.*

1. *It would be a great benefit to Parents.* One of the great Miseries of the Land is, That Children are not well educated; they are bred up to Work, but are not well instructed: Parents don't teach them, warn them, govern them, give good Examples to them: Hence many Children are Ignorant, and Rude, and Prophane. This Unfaithfulness brings many Parents to eternal Ruine,

Ruine, and their Indulgence is the cause of the Damnation of their Children. *Eli's* Indulgence had an influence into the Destruction of *Hophni* and *Phineas*. If Parents were more careful that they might *not go to Hell themselves*, they would be more Laborious in teaching their Children, and in *bringing them up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord*; and if they were more careful that their Children might not go to Hell, they would not connive at their Sins, and countenance them in their Worldliness and Pride; they would warn them more solemnly, restrain and govern them more thoroughly. Prov. 23. 14. *Thou shalt beat him with the Rod, and deliver his Soul from Hell.*

2. *It would be a great benefit to Ministers.* Ministers may fail of their Duty many ways, in not convincing Men of their Sins, not setting sufficient Light before them for their Conviction; in not bearing a due Testimony against their Iniquities; in not searching Men thoroughly whether they be in Jesus Christ, suffering them to deceive themselves with false Imaginations of Peace with God, by complying with the Sins of the Land, by Preaching like the Scribes
without

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without Authority. But if they had a sense of the dreadfulnes of Damnation, and a due care of their own Salvation, and the Salvation of their People, they would be more thorow in their Work. Paul urges *Timothy* by this Consideration: 1 Tim. 4. 16. *Take heed to thy self and to thy Doctrines, continue in them, for in so doing, thou shalt both save thy self, and those that hear thee.* A sense of the Terroure of the Lord would be a great help to them. 2 Cor. 5. 11. *Knowing the Terrours of the Lord, we perswade Men.* The solemn Thoughts of this would make them careful of their Preaching, and their Example. 1 Cor. 9. 27. *Lest by any means when I have Preached to others, I my self should be a Cast-away.*

3. *It would be a great benefit to Rulers.* It is a rare thing that God is provoked with a People, but the Rulers have some Hand in it. Rulers may miss it many ways: When in their private Conversation they are not good Examples, that emboldens other Men to Transgress: They may miss it by being backward to promote Religion, when they are Gallio like, *Not caring for those things.* When they don't strengthen the Hands of Under-Officers, by not mak-

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ing use of their Information, suffering things to drop without due Examination. They may be very Faulty by not punishing Vice duly, having an indulgent Spirit towards those that are guilty of Misdemeanors; by not stating the Case right unto the Jury, speaking in favour of those whose Case is naught, by not cutting of the occasions of Sin. Where there is much Temptation, there will be much Provocation, by being intimate with Men of vicious Conversation: This is a discredit to them, a way to harden dissolute Persons. It is *very profitable for Rulers to have a cautious fear of Hell.* They that Judge others must be judged: They that sit upon the Bench must stand at the Bar; all acts of Judgment must be called over again, and have a second Hearing. It is good for them that sit in Judgment to remember the Day, wherein they must appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ: It is good for them to ask that Question, Job 31. 14. *What shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?*

4. *It would be a great benefit to Under-Officers.* The Work of some Under-Officers is, *To inform themselves of the breaches*

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of Law, and to give Information to Rulers. They may fail of their Duty by neglecting to get Knowledge, lest they should be counted Busie-bodies; and by neglecting to give Information, either from Friendship or from Fear, or to prevent Trouble. There be other Under-Officers who are to judge in Causes Civil and Criminal. Their Work is to give a *Verdict*; a *Verdict* is *Verumdictum*, a true Sentence: And though they are under a necessity to bring in a *Verdict*, yet they are in no Snare, to act against their Consciences. If they be all of a Mind, their way is fair; if they can't be all of a Mind, they must in *Civil Cases* bring in for the *Defendant*: In *Criminal* they must bring in *Not Guilty*, for those are Negative Verdicts: The meaning is, They can't agree to give the Case to the *Plantiff*, or to *Condemn the Prisoner*. But these Men may fail much, when some for quietness do comply with the Judgment of others against their own Light: So likewise when they bring in a *wrong Verdict*, from *Friendship* or *Bribery*, or *Credulity*, depending on the Infallibility of the *Lawyer* that Pleads the Case, it would be very Serviceable for these Men to remember the Judgment

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ment of the last Day, and the Punishment that will be inflicted on ungodly Men. Under-Officers may bring a Wo upon themselves, Isa. 10. 1. Under-Officers may prevent much Injustice, Joh. 7. 46.

5. *It would be a great benefit to Buyers and Sellers.* There is abundance of Iniquity in *Sellers*; as when they put off that which is not Merchantable. Am. 8. 6. *They sell the refuse of the Wheat.* So when they take advantage on the Ignorance and Necessities of Men, to exact unreasonably from them, when they go beyond the bounds of Truth, in commending what they would Sell, or in telling what it stands them in. There is also abundance of Iniquity in *Buyers*, in running down the worth of what they would Purchase, in telling that they have bought much Cheaper, and that they know they shall loose by it. Prov. 20. 14. *It is naught, it is naught, saith the Buyer: but when he goeth away, he Boasteth.* Some not paying faithfully: Sometimes they promise what they cannot see their way to perform. Sometimes they neglect to Pay when they could, because they can make advantage of their Money, they defraud their Creditours. Equivocation is interwoven

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woven in the very act of Trading. If these Men were *afraid of Hell*, they would quickly *leave off such Methods*: Were they sensible what it is to be Damned, they would not lie upon the Catch, and be so injurious one unto another. They should remember, *That their Gains will eat their Flesh as Fire*, Jam. 5. 3.

6. *It would be a great Benefit to young Persons.* Many young Persons take a licentious Liberty; some of them give way to a wanton Spirit; they addict themselves to dalliance, don't attend Family Orders, spend the Sabbath in a Prophan way; they are devoted to their Pride, give themselves up to Mirth and Jollitry, and neglect the opportunities of Salvation. The Counsels of Parents, and warnings of Teachers don't sink into their Hearts; they hate to live a Moping Melancholy Life, to be confessing their Sins, and crying to God for Pardon; but if they were *afraid of Hell*, that would make a mighty change in their Carriage, a sense of *Hell-Fire* would soon scare them out of those Humours; they would not dare to do what now they are bold to do; they would have no Heart to prosecute their carnal Designs; they would

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be deaf to Temptations; no Arguments would prevail with them, they would as soon be perswaded to handle an Iron burning hot, as to practise their former Ways: They would be soon weaned from the World, and take up the Practice of Religion. Ecl. 11. 9. Rejoyce, O young Man in thy Youth, and let thy Heart cheer thee in the Days of thy Youth, and walk in the ways of thy Heart, and in the sight of thine Eyes, but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into Judgment.

3 USE. Of Exhortation, to be afraid of Hell. Man is a frightful Creature, apt to be afraid of many little Evils, yet by reason of Sin, Men are so hard-hearted, that they are not much afraid of Hell. Christ Jesus directs us to be afraid of Hell, Mat. 10. 28. Fear him that can cast both Body and Soul into Hell. * Especially those that are in a natural Estate, have reason to be afraid of Hell. Isa. 33. 14. Sinners in Zion are afraid, Trembling takes hold of Hypocrites: who among us can dwell with devouring Fire? who among us can dwell with everlasting Burnings? Some Men are much to blame, that they put away the fear of Hell; they shun and avoid it what they can, but consider seriously

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ously, whether you have not abundant cause to fear Hell.

Consider two Things. 1. *The Miseries of Hell will be exceeding great.* The Miseries that have been indured by some in this World, have been amazing: It is hard to grapple with the hearing of them, and it must be much harder to bear them; but the Miseries of Hell are far greater. Heb. 10. 31. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the Hands of the living God.* The Appostle speaking of the Glory of Heaven, calls it, *A far more Exceeding and Eternal weight of Glory*, 1 Cor. 4. 17. So we may say of the Misery of Hell, it is, *A far more Exceeding and Eternal weight of Misery*,

Mind here these three things.

1. *The Persons will be in Distress, they rest not Day nor Night*; their Misery will be overbearing to them; there will be no room for any Comforts; they will have no ease to Comfort them; they will have no hope to Comfort them; they will have no peace of Conscience to Comfort them; they will wish they had not been, they will wish they could cease to be; their former Enjoyments will be no Refreshment to them; their Companions in Misery will be no Re-

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freshing; they must endure futable Reven-
ges for all their Rebellions, and the Con-
tempt that they have cast upon God, they
will be standing Monuments of the Ven-
geance of Heaven. Rom. 2. 8, 9. *God will
render Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and
Anguish.* If their Strength were the Strength
of Stones, or their Flesh of Brasses, they could
not endure their Misery. They will have
Anguish of Spirit, not know what in the
World to do; there will be dreadful Wail-
ing, Mat. 13. 42. They will lament their
Sins, they will bewail the loss of Oppor-
tunities; they will condemn their Folly,
they will curse themselves, they will wish
they had never seen such things as now
their Hearts dote upon; their cry will go
up to Heaven; they will wish they had no
Senses; their Hearing and Seeing and Feel-
ing will be their Misery, their Memory,
their Understanding, their Conscience will
be their Torment; they will wish they had
no Bodies, and wish they had no Souls,
their *Bodies and Souls will be Vessels of Wrath.*

2. *These Miseries are set forth by doleful
Comparisons.* No Comparison can fully set
forth the Miseries of Hell, because those
Miseries do exceed all others; but some
other

object of Love and Joy
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other Miseries may in an affecting manner represent to us, somewhat of the Miseries of Hell. Hell is compared to a *Dark Dungeon*, Mat. 8. 12. The Children of the Kingdom shall be cast into outer *Darkness*. So Jud. 13. we read, *That the Blackness of Darkness is reserved for ungodly Men.* *Jeremiah* the Prophet was in a sorrowful Condition, when cast into the *Dungeon*: It was a dark miry Hole, for he sunk in the *Mire*, Jer. 38. 6. When Persons are in a *Dungeon*, they are confined, and have no Liberty; it is always dark and black Night, they are cut of from all pleasant Enjoyments, they dwell in the shadow of Death. A *Dungeon* is next to a *Grave*; there the Light is as *Darkness*. Again, it is compared to *Sodom*, when it was all on a light *Fire*, Rev. 21. 8. *They shall have their part in the Lake that burneth with Fire and Brimstone, which is the second Death.* The People were in a miserable Condition, when streams of Fire and Brimstone fell from Heaven upon their Houses, and upon their Ground, and upon their Bodies, Men, Women, Children, all like *light Torches*, their Bodies blazed, how did they Scream out and Roar in that Extremity? So Hell is compared to the
Valley

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Valley of the Son of Hinnom, where they burnt their Children to Moleck. Hence Hell is called *Gebenna*, the *Land of Hinnom*. Mat. 5. 29. So it is set forth by *Tophet*, Isa. 30. 33. which was the same Place. There they burnt them as Sacrifices to the Devil, and made a noise with Trumpets and other Instruments, that they might drown the noise of the Cryes of the poor Children, they could not bear their Roarings. Hell is worse than all these.

3. *Whatever the Miseries in Hell be, they will be Eternal.* These Miseries will never have an End: Life will have an End, this and that Kingdom will have an End; the Captivity of *Babylon* had an End; the Rejection of the *Jews* will have an End, and the World will have an End Mat. 25. 36. *These shall go away into everlasting Punishment.* Mar. 9. 44. There the *Worm dyeth not*, there the *Fire is not quenched*. The duration of their Misery cannot be measured: We may measure the breadth of the Earth, and the circuit of the Heaven, but can't measure Eternity. Add Thousands to Thousands, and multiply Millions by Millions, fill Quires of Paper with Numbers, and you can't measure Eternity; It cannot be divided.

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divided into Days, or Years, or Ages; make never so many Parts of it, one will be Eternal: When Men have suffered never so long, there is an Eternity remaining: It don't grow shorter and shorter. This makes every part of their Misery Infinite, their Pain will be Infinite, the Terror Infinite. If Miseries End, there is an opportunity for Comfort afterwards; but Eternity cuts off opportunities for Comfort: Men may well say, *Who can dwell with everlasting Burnings?*

2. Consider, *It is a difficult thing to escape Hell.* It may be avoided, and there be a number of Men that do escape it, but they are but few. It is a difficult thing to bear Damnation, and a difficult thing to attain Salvation. God has made a way to escape, but very few will comply with it. It is very cross to Nature; it suits the Glory of God, but it don't suit Men's Humours. Math. 7. 14. *Few there be that find it.*

1. *Many that take Pains to escape it do not.* Many Men make attempts to escape it, but are not successful. Men are like Prisoners bound with Chains and cannot make their escape themselves. Many went out of Egypt that never reached Canaan. Some that endeavour

desire to escape, meet with Disappointments and Difficulties, and are discouraged; they are scared with the *Anakims* and high Walls, and grow Heartless. Some of them get into a wrong way, they get a dead Faith and Hope, that that will serve their turn: They have somewhat like Conversion, and take it to be Conversion; it passes among Men, and they hope it will stand when they appear before God. They have got a Righteousness, but it doth not exceed the Righteousness of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*. Some others there be, that after they have put away their Sins, and reformed their Lives, do return to their Vomit again, and some go on seeking till they are surprized with Death. Death comes upon them before they have got through their Work: There is great odds in the number of them that seek, and of them that find. Luk. 13. 24. *Many seek, and are not able to enter,*

2. *Many that think they have escaped it, will not.* Many Men are Ignorant, Rash and Foolish, and so not very capable to pass Judgment on themselves; their Judgment is worth very little in an hundred other Cases: But indeed wise Men may easily be deceived.

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deceived; partly because of the similitude that is between false Grace and true. I have read of a Painter, that pictured *Grapes* so exactly, that the Birds were deceived by them, and took them for real *Grapes*. There is indeed a great difference between true Grace and false; but there is also such a similitude, that wise Men may be mistaken. Men are frequently mistaken in Silver and in Jewels, so if they look upon Persons at a distance, they are easily mistaken in them; so especially when they look upon religious Actions that have been performed formerly. One great thing that exposes Men to judge amiss is, That they are some way or other Prejudicate; partly from Pride, partly from Fear, partly from love of Ease, partly from a dependance on the Opinion of others, and many are deceived. Prov. 30. 12. *There is a Generation that are pure in their own Eyes, yet are not cleansed from their Filthiness.* Rev. 3. 17. *Thou sayest thou art Rich, and increased in Goods, and hast need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art Poor, and Miserable, and Wretched, and Blind, and Naked.*

3. *Many whom the World blesses, as if they would escape it, will not.* Men are not com-
petant

30 *The fear of Hell,*

petant Judges of others: Men may have Foundation enough for *a judgment of Charity*, but they have no Foundation for *a judgment of Certainty*. Men may be very Censorious of real Saints, as *Job's Friends* were; they may judge hardly of Saints, because of their Infirmities, and because of their own Prejudices. So many have the Reputation of Saints, that are not Saints. Rev. 3. 1. *Thou hast a Name that thou livest, and art dead*. Men have nothing but External things to judge by, which are separable from Grace. Sometimes they take Gifts for Grace; but many have the *Gift of Prayer*, that have not the *Spirit of Prayer*. Sometimes Men take *Common Grace* for *Special*. Zeal and Affection may be in Men destitute of Grace. Sometimes they take a Religious Conversation for an Holy Conversation: All that they judge by, are but probable Signs, and twenty Probabilities will not make a thing Certain. Probabilities may make a thing legally Certain, but not Infallibly so. Where there be but Probabilities, there is a possibility of the contrary. Many Probabilities make a thing more Probable, but they do not amount to a Demonstration. Some of the wisest of
Men

restraining from Sin. 31

Men have been mistaken: *David* was mistaken in *Ahitophel*, the Disciples in *Judas*, the Church of *Jerusalem* in *Nicholas* of *Antioch*; No Man can look into the Heart of another, and see there a Spirit of Love and Faith. 1 Sam. 16. 7. *Man looketh on the outward Appearance, but the Lord looketh on the Heart.*

James Lymann of Northampton

*James Lymann his book
I bought in the year 1713*

Price 26 for the

*James Lymann
his book R^d with*

32 *The benefit of the Gospel,*

Luke 4. 18, 19.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to Preach the Gospel to the Poor, he hath sent me to heal the Broken-hearted, to Preach Deliverance to the Captives, and recovering of Sight to the Blind, to set at liberty them that are Bruised, to Preach the acceptable Year of the Lord.

The Third Sermon

The First Sermon.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me.

THIS is a Text Jesus Christ himself preached upon at Nazareth, which was the Place of His Education. It is taken from Isai. 61. 1, 2, where there is but little Variation as to the Words.

to the wounded in Spirit. 33

Words, but a great agreement as to the Intendment of them. The Sermon that Christ preached is not upon Record; but we have the *Preface*, V. 21. *This Day is this Scripture fulfilled in your Ears*, which gives us some Light, and shews us that the Prophecy doth relate unto himself. In these Words is a Prediction of the Spirit's coming upon Him.

Q. What is meant by the Spirit?

A. The Third Person in the Trinity.

God, Father, Son, and Holy-Ghost are one and the same spiritual Substance. But here the Third Person is understood. Sometimes He is called the *Spirit of the living God*. 2 Cor. 3. 3. Sometimes the *Spirit*. 1 Joh. 32. *I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven*. Sometimes the *Spirit of Christ*. Phil. 1. 19. *The supply of the Spirit of Christ*. Sometimes the *Holy Spirit*. Eph. 4. 30. *Grieve not the holy Spirit of God*. Sometimes the *Spirit of Grace*. Heb. 10. *And have done despite to the Spirit of Grace*.

Q. Why is the Spirit said to be upon Him?

A. It is all one as if the Spirit was said to be in Him.

The same Expression we have, 2 Kin. 15. *The Spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha*.

C

And

34 *The benefit of the Gospel,*

And *Isai. II. 2. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him.* It may have a respect to the Spirit's visible descending on Him. *Math. 3. 16. He saw the Spirit of God descending like a Dove, and lighting upon Him.*

This is amplyfied by the Reason, *Because the Lord hath anointed me.* The Priests were seperated to their Office by this Ceremony. *Lev. 8. 12. He poured of the anointing Oyl upon Aaron's Head, and anointed him to sanctify him.* So the meaning is, That God had seperated and ordained him to this Office, to Preach the Gospel.

DOCTRINE. *Ministers had need have the Spirit of the Lord upon them, in order to the reviving of Religion among his People.* There are some times of Degeneracy and Declension in the Church. Sometimes Commonwealths are in a languishing way. Sometimes the Estates of a People are under Decay. So, sometimes Religion is in a withering Condition; but there are means that are serviceable for the reviving of it. And this is one special means, when the Ministers have the Spirit of the Lord upon them. The Spirit of the Lord must be poured out upon the People, else Religion will not revive. But when the Spirit is upon the Ministers

to the wounded in Spirit. 35

Ministers, it is a very hopeful Sign. Mal. 4. 6. *I will send you Elijah the Prophet, and he shall turn the Heart of the Fathers to the Children, and the Heart of the Children to their Fathers, lest I come and smite the Earth with Curse.* This was accomplished when God sent John the Baptist, who was filled with the Holy Ghost. So after the Apostles were filled with the Spirit, much was done by their Ministry, for the advancing of Religion.

Q. How doth the Spirit's being upon Ministers, conduce to the reviving of Religion?

A. Two Ways especially.

1. The Spirit gives them a Zeal for God's Glory, and the Salvation of Souls. When the Spirit of God is upon them they will be much concerned for God's Glory. So it was with Elijah, 1 Kin. 19. 10. I have been very zealous for the Lord God of Hosts. They will not be indifferent whether God's Kingdom flourish or not; their Hearts will not be upon the World, but their Hearts will be engaged for God's Honour, So for the Salvation of Mens Souls. They will take a great deal of Care that their Hearers do not Perish. 1 Cor. 10. 33. Not seeking my own Profit, but the Profit of many that they

As a part of the Gospel
Riches will not by right
36 The benefit of the Gospel,

may be saved. 1 Cor. 9. 19, 20, 21, 22. I have made my self a Servant to all, that I may gain the more, &c. I am made all things to all Men, that by all means I may save some.

1. Hereby they are disposed to Study and Preach such things as do especially tend to the reviving of Religion. There be several other Truths, that in their Season must be studied and Preached. Ministers must not decline to Preach the whole Counsel of God; no part of the Word of God is in Vain. But when they are zealous for God's Honour and Mens Salvation, they will set themselves to revive Religion; they will dwell upon those things that do more directly tend to the furtherance of Mens Salvation. Such things as will take with the Consciences of Men. Ecl. 12. 10. The Preacher sought to find out acceptable Words. They will consider the Necessities of People, and strive to relieve them. So it was with Paul, Act. 20. 21. Testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, Repentance towards God, and Faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. The Corruptions of the Land will stir up their Spirit. Act. 17. 16. When Paul waited for them at Athens, his Spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the City given to Idolatry.

2. Hereby

in the midst of his Passions
to the wounded in Spirit. 37

2. Hereby they are prepared to declare the Word of God Powerfully. The Word of God is as an Hammer, and Men must smite with Strength to make the Nail Enter, or the Rock to Break. If the Word of God be preached in a dull dead Way, it is not like to have much Efficacy. Men will be in danger to think that the Preacher himself don't believe it, or that he lays no great weight upon it. But when they have an holy Zeal, that makes them to be Boanerges, Sons of Thunder, they will be earnest and fervent. That was the Commendation of Appollos, That he was fervent in Spirit. Act. 18. 25. So Christ taught. Math. 7. 29. He taught as one having Authority, and not as the Scribes. And this made his Doctrine the more affecting. V. 28. The People were astonished at his Doctrine. This was foretold of Christ. Mic. 5. 4. He shall tread and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the Majesty of the Name of the Lord his God. Zeal will inflame the Heart, and make Men declare the Word of God, so as to awaken others, and not lull them to sleep. Such Men will speak in the heat of their Spirits. When Men are sensible of the breaking out of Fire, or the approach of Enemies, they will cry out

And in the morning
38 *The benefit of the Gospel,*

earnestly. So the Prophet directed, *Isa. 58. 1. Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy Voice like a Trumpet, and shew my People their Transgression, and the House of Jacob their Sins.*

3: Hereby they are filled with Courage to dispense the Word of God faithfully. There is danger that some Men will be provoked, if they be told plainly of their Sins, if their Confidences be shaken, and they be dealt plainly with. And if Ministers have not a Spirit of Zeal, they will be in danger to neglect speaking what they should; be afraid to speak too tenderly: But if they have a Spirit of Zeal, that will make them faithful. *Jer. 20. 9. His Word was in my Heart as a burning Fire, shut up in my Bones, I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.* They ought to speak whether Men will hear or not. *Ezeck. 2. 7. Thou shalt speak my Words to them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.* And Zeal will make Men faithful, though others be angry. *Act. 2. 36. Let all the House of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made this same Jesus whom ye crucified both Lord and Christ.* Zeal strengthens the Heart against Fear. So the Prophet dealt plainly with *Aza*, and the Baptist with *Herod*.

First Communion
to the wounded in Spirit. 39.

2. If the Spirit be upon Ministers, that gives them Understanding and Wisdom for their Work. The Spirit of God makes them Studious, busie in Reading and Meditating, and thereby they get Understanding. The Spirit suggests suitable Thoughts to them, and thereby they get Understanding. The Spirit of God opens their Eyes, gives spiritual Discoveries to them, and thereby they get Understanding. All Wisdom comes from God. Men are led by the Spirit into the consideration of Providences, and so they get a great deal of Experience. God gave Solomon Wisdom in a more than ordinary Way; and he hath his Ways to give Wisdom to Men for their Work that he calls them to. It was foretold concerning Christ, That God would give Wisdom to Him. *Isai. 11. 23.* The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding, the Spirit of Counsel and Might, the Spirit of Knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord, and shall make him of quick Understanding in the fear of the Lord. God by his Spirit, furnishes Men with Knowledge to be Serviceable.

1. Hereby he makes them able to discover Mens Iniquities to them. Many Men practise

C 4.

Things

40 *The benefit of the Gospel,*

Things that are Evil, under a Notion of Liberty. Through Custome, and carnal Reason, and their dependance upon the Judgment of others, they stand in the Defence of sinful Ways; they have a great deal to say in the Vindication of them, and some times don't suspect them to be Evil: But God by giving Understanding to Ministers, doth enable them to lay convincing Light before them, and make it plain from the Word of God, that those Ways are Evil. That is required of Ministers, that they do *convince Gainsayers*, Tit. 1. 9. So Christ Jesus lay'd abundance of Light before the *Scribes and Pharisees*, to shew them their Iniquities. And *Paul* laid abundance of Light before the *Gentiles*, to shew them their Vanity and Sin in Worshipping of Idols. And *Apollos* laid Light before the *Jews*, to convince of their Sin in rejecting Christ. Act. 18. 28. *He mightily convinced the Jews, and that publickly, shewing by the Scriptures, that Jesus was Christ.*

2. *Hereby they are made able to speak Terror to the Consciences of Sinners.* If the Consciences of Men be terrified, that makes way for their Conversion. Terror of Conscience makes way for Mens coming to Christ.

to the wounded in Spirit. 41

Christ. Gal. 3. 24. *The Law was our School-master, to bring us to Christ.* And the Spirit of God, by giving them Understanding, fits them for this Work, thereby they are enabled to represent in an affecting Manner, the dreadful Miseries that Sinners are in danger of. So did *John the Baptist*, and the People of the *Publicans*, and the *Souldiers* were much affected, and enquired what they must do. Luk. 3. 10, 12, 14. Ministers hereby are enabled to find out several Considerations to evidence to Men, the certainty of their Ruine, if they do continue in a natural Condition; and to shew the truth of that, Mat. 5. 18. *That not one jot or tittle shall pass from the Law, but all shall be fulfilled.* And they are able to convince Men what danger there is that they will never be Converted: To lay open the wretchedness of the Heart, and its mighty Opposition to the Gospel, the great advantages of Satan to Seduce; the many by-paths that Men are wont to take, the uncertainty of God's giving Repentance to them, as the Apostle teaches, 2 Tim. 2. 25. *If peradventure God will give Repentance to the acknowledging of the Truth.*

S. Hoby

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3. Hereby they are able to discover to Men the Deceits of their Hearts. Man's Heart is full of Deceit. Jer. 17. 9. *The Heart is Deceitful and desperately Wicked, who can know it?* Men are wont to make plausible Pretences for their Sins. They have many Things to say in way of Apology for themselves, excusing their Sins. They pretend that they are willing to know their own Hearts. They pretend that they do see their own Insufficiency. They pretend Love to God, and Faith in Jesus Christ: But God by his Spirit, enables Ministers so to lay open the Deceitfulness of their Hearts, that they are brought to know themselves. If Men could hold their Deceits, they would live and die in Hypocrisy: But God helps Ministers to unravel their Hearts, and so he leads them into an Understanding of themselves. 2 Cor. 10. 4. *The weapons of our Warfare are not Carnal, but Mighty through God, to the pulling down of Strong Holds.* Heb. 4. 12. *The Word of God is quick, and powerful, sharper than any two-edged Sword, dividing asunder Soul and Spirit, Joints and Marrow, and is a discerner of the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart,*

to the wounded in Spirit. 43

4. Hereby they are made able to direct them in the right Way. Men that are distressed in Conscience, are many times at an utter Loss what to do; and are prone to run into By-paths, and take very improper Methods for their help. They are contriving in what way to get Pardon and Grace; and they would undo themselves, but God by his Spirit, helps Ministers to guide them in the right Way. Mal. 2. 7. *The Priests Lips should keep Knowledge, and they should seek the Law at his Mouth.* Ministers are to be their Guide. It is their Work to direct them, that they may not quench the Motions of the Spirit; to direct them that they may not grow Secure; that they may not settle on their own Righteousness; that they may not get a false Faith; that they may not be discouraged; that they may have no Prejudices against God and his Ways, that the Work may be hastned, and that they may be led to Christ. Samuel tells the People, That he will teach them the good and the right Way. 1 Sam. 12. 23. So when God gives the Spirit to his Ministers, they are fitted to lead Sinners in the right Way to Christ.

Reason.

44 *The benefit of the Gospel,*

I Reason. *Men are so Blind and Corrupt, that it is very difficult to Work upon them.* Men by Nature are in Darknes. Rev. 3. 17. *Thou art Blind.* They have wholly lost their spiritual Sight, and their natural Conscience is very defective: It is very slow to conceive of those things that it can conceive of. Men are subject to abundance of Delusion; they are under the prevailing of carnal Reasonings, easily deceived with Appearances and Shews, subject to flatter themselves: they become *Vain in their Imaginations, and their foolish Hearts are Darkned.* Rom. 1. 21. And through Heedlessness and Forgetfulness, they are very Ignorant of what they might know. Tit. 1. 15. *Their Mind and Conscience are defiled, and the Hearts of Men are very much depraved.* They are violently set upon their carnal Interests. Jer. 50. 38. *They are mad on their Idols.* They are exceedingly addicted to the Love of the World: They are set for Profit, and Pleasure, and Honour: Their business is to advance their own Interest. They can't endure to Reform their Lives. They say as Jer. 2. 25. *They have followed after Idols, and after them they will go.* They are full of Enmity to God and his Ways. Rom.

to the wounded in Spirit. 45

Rom. 8. 7. *The natural Mind is Enmity to God, is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be.* Hence, if they have but little Means, ordinarily they take very little Impression. Men that are fast asleep, will not be awakened with a little Noise. More gentle Means will not do with naughty Children. Small Blows will not break a Rock; gentle Physick will not do for a stubborn Disease. If Ministers be Ignorant and Sluggish, there is little likelihood that much Good will be wrought.

2 Reason. *Yet Men have so much Conscience and self Love, that it is difficult to withstand powerful Means.* Though sinful Men are like the Beasts that Perish, yet they are not Beasts. They have a Conscience in them, and that tells them that there is a God that made Heaven and Earth; that he is to be served; that his Anger is Terrible, and that his Word must needs be true. The Gentiles shewed, *That the Work of the Law was written in their Hearts.* Rom. 2. 15. And they have likewise a principle of self Love in them; they are craving Happiness. Psal 4. 6. *Who will shew us any Good?* They dread Misery; and abhor Destruction. From these two Principles they are capable

46 *The benefit of the Gospel,*

to be wrought upon. When the Wrath of God is set before them in a lively Manner, their Consciences will echo to it. This rouses up those sparks of Light that are in Conscience, and Conscience adds its Testimony. Hence the Men are afraid, they Tremble lest God should execute Vengeance upon them; they would fain get their Sins Pardoned. When they hear the clear Reasonings, and powerful Dispensations of the Word, they cannot but fear: And they think, What shall they be profited, if they should get the whole World, and loose their own Soul? So when they hear searching Preaching, that leads Conscience into the Examination of their Hearts and Ways, and puts them upon it to labour after the power of Godliness. A Workman may bring rude Timber into Form. A Skilful Physitian may be a means to remove a stubborn Disease. Dull Consciences may be frightened: Proper Means may by God's Blessing, revive Religion.

I. *USE. The Case of the Christian World is very Sorrowful.* A great part of the World makes a Profession of Christ; but there is little sincere Religion; very little of the power of Godliness: And it may be said,
not

to the wounded in Spirit. 47

not of some particular Persons only, but of some Nations, as Rev. 3. 1. *They have a Name that they Live, but are Dead.* There be great Pretences to Religion, but God is but little honoured, and few Souls are saved. Religion doth not flourish in many Places, for the Ministers have not the Spirit of God upon them.

I. *Some are Heretical.* There were abundance of Heresies in the Days of the Apostles, and there be many in these Days. The *Papists* hold Justification by Works, that it is lawful to have Images in Worship: That the *Pope* is Infallible, and has power to forgive Sin, &c. The *Socinians* deny the Doctrine of the blessed Trinity, the Divinity of Christ, and that He bore the Curse for us. The *Arminians* hold universal Redemption, Election from Faith foreseen, the Power of Free-will, and falling from Grace. And they be Ministers especially that do propogate these Opinions, and beguile Ignorant Men. They pervert the Scripture, and wrest it to their own Destruction, and the Destruction of many others. Learned Men are the great seducers that promote damnable Heresies. These Men hinder the flourishing of Religion. *They Increase unto more Ungodliness.*

2 Tim.

James & John
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2 Tim. 2. 16. Men are led Captive by them
2 Tim. 3. 6.

2. *Some are wicked Livers.* They that should teach others to keep the Law of God break it themselves. So it was with Hophni and Phineas. 1 Sam. 2. 22. *They lay with the Women that assembled at the Door of the Tabernacle of the Congregation.* So it was afterwards, Isai. 43. 27. *Thy Teachers have transgressed against me.* So the Scribes and Pharisees under the pretence of long Prayers, did devour Widdows Houses. Math. 23. 14. And so it is at this Day, in many Places of the Christian World. Many that should lead Men to Heaven, are guilty of debauched Practices: They are Swearers, Drunkards, Unclean, and Prophaners of the Sabbath. Religion is not like to flourish under the Influence of such Men. Such Teachers take a Course to root Religion out of the Places where they Dwell. They that teach Wickedness by their Practices, are like to do little good by their Doctrine.

3. *Some are Ignorant.* Many that are set up to Teach, have knowledge to Read, and that is in a manner, all the Learning that they have. Jeroboam did not matter who he made to be Priests. So 'tis with many others.

to the wounded in Spirit. 49

others. God complained of Old, of the Ignorance of Teachers. *Isai. 56. 10. His Watchmen are Blind, they are all Ignorant.* Men need a great deal of Knowledge, to be able to Instruct others. But some Teachers are Ignorant of the Principles of Religion; are not able to vindicate them. They are not versed in the Scriptures. These Men will be poor Helps to the Souls of others. Blindness is a very bad Property in a Guide. *If the Blind lead the Blind, both will fall into the Ditch. Math. 15. 14.* When Teachers are Ignorant, the People will be destroyed for lack of Knowledge. *Hos. 4. 6.*

4. *Some want Experience.* Some Ministers have good Learning, a good Conversation, and Religious Affections, and so they may do some Good: They may be means to restrain some Men from Sin. Yea, they may be Instruments of Conversion; but such a Ministry is not like to revive Religion in a Land, as have not Experiences. The Condition of such a Country is very sorrowful. *Jer. 2. 8. They that handle the Law, know me not.* It is a great Blessing, when People have such Ministers as are able to Comfort others with that Comfort, wherewith they themselves have been Comforted.

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50 *The benefit of the Gospel,*

forted of God. 2 Cor. 1. 4. Men that have had Experience of Temptation, and Relief under them, of their own Hearts, and of Jesus Christ, are most likely to be Instruments of the reviving of Religion.

2 *USE of Direction to People, what Ministers to chuse.* It is of great Concernment to have Religion revived. God useth great Means in order to it: He brings great Judgments and Calamities in order to it. But a special Means to obtain this, is, To have such Ministers as have the Spirit of God upon them. In *Jeroboam's* time, they did not care who were *Priests*. 2 Chron. 13. 9. *Whosoever cometh to Consecrate himself with a young Bullock, and seven Rams, the same may be a Priest of them that are no Gods.* But if you desire the flourishing of Religion, get such Men for Ministers, that it may be said of them, as God said of *Joshua*, Numb. 27. 18. *Take Joshua the Son of Nun, a Man in whom is the Spirit, and lay thine Hand upon him.*

But there is a double Difficulty in this.
1. *Some that are to Chuse, don't regard this.* In some Places the care of this Matter belongs to the Patron; and many times such have little Regard to Present those that are

Salvation
to the wounded in Spirit. 51

fit for the Work: And where the People have a Liberty to chuse, they are careless of making a good Choice. Some are *Purse-ridden*, and don't matter who they have, so they can have him upon *easy Terms*. Micah got one on easy Terms, and satisfied himself that he had a *Levite to be his Priest*. Judg. 17. 13. Some love one that will *Prophecy smooth Things*, and nourish them in their vain Hopes of eternal Life. Isai. 30. 10. *They say to the Seers, See not? and to the Prophets, Prophesie not right Things, speak unto us smooth Things, Prophesie Deceits*. Some would have one that is a *cheerly Companion*. Some would have one that would please their *itching Ears*. 2 Tim. 4. 3. *After their own Lusts they shall heap to themselves Teachers having itching Ears*. People that have but little Religion, are in danger to take up with Ministers that have not the Spirit.

2. Some don't know where to find them. Some would be glad to get such an one, but they know not where to suit themselves. We are not come to that pass that is spoken of, Am. 8. 11, 12. *I will send a Famine in the Land; not a Famine of Bread, nor a Thirst of Water, but of hearing the Word*

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of the Lord. And they shall wander from Sea to Sea, and from the North even to the East, they shall run to and fro to seek the Word of the Lord, and shall not find it. But yet there is no great plenty of such Men as have the Spirit of God upon them. It is a Mercy that People may find those that have good Learning, and that are Orthodox in their Principles, and of a good Conversation; but there be not many that have the Spirit. People must take up with such as they can get; that that is wanting can't be numbered.

3 *USE of Exhortation, to Pray for the Ministry.* It is the Duty of Ministers to Pray for the People; and it is the Duty of the People to Pray for their Ministers. The Ministers are bound by their Office, to Pray for the People; and the People are bound by their Interest to Pray for their Ministers. When they Pray for their Ministers, they Pray for themselves. *Moses Prays for them, Deut. 33. 8. Of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy One.* We find *Paul* several times begging the Prayers of the Church. *Eph. 6. 18, 19. Praying with all manner of Prayer and Supplication, for all Saints; and for me, that Utterance may be given*

to the wounded in Spirit. 53

given to me, that I may open my Mouth boldly, to make known the Mystery of the Gospel. So 2 Thes. 3. 1. Finally Brethren, Pray for us, that the Word of the Lord may have free Course, and be glorified even as it is with you. Heb. 13. 18. Pray for us. This should move the People of God to Pray for their Ministers, because if the Spirit rest upon them, that is a Preparation for the reviving of Religion. It is a Burden to the Spirit of all godly Men, that there are such decays of Religion; that few are Converted and that Iniquity doth so abound: And therefore you should be longing after that, that it may revive again.

Consider 1. If Religion don't revive, the Country will become more Wicked. Pride and Wantonness, and Worldliness and Prophe- ness do abound in the Land. There be many bad Examples; there is a great deal of the breaking out of Sin. In many Places they have a very ill Name on the account of their Iniquities. Many People do declare their Sin as Sodom, and hide it not. And how shall a stop be put to it, unless Religion do revive? unless Men be awakned and convinced? Ezek. 36. 25, 26, 27. I will sprinkle clean Water upon you, and you shall

J. by J. Swain
54 *The benefit of the Gospel,*

be Clean; from all your Filthiness, and from all your Idols will I cleanse you. A new Heart also will I give unto you, and a new Spirit will I put within you, and I will take this stony Heart out of your Flesh, and I will give you an Heart of Flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my Statutes. Some think Family Government may put a stop to Sin. Some think the Zeal of Rulers, and Faithfulness of Officers may put a stop to Sin. But how shall these things be come at, if the Spirit of Religion do not revive among us?

2. *If Religion don't revive, Multitudes will Perish for ever. If Religion don't revive, how shall Men get to Heaven? The Form of Godliness will not bring Men to Heaven. Coming to Meeting, going to Lectures, joining to Churches will not secure Salvation. What will become of the Posterity of the People of God, if Religion don't revive? Morality will not prepare Men for Dying. Joh. 3. 3. Except a Man be Born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. If Men be Converted, their Sins will be forgiven. Act. 3. 19. But if they be not Converted, they will not be forgiven. Unregenerate Men are very Charitable to one another,*

Turning James his back
to the wounded in Spirit. 55

another, but they will go to Hell, Math. 8. 12. *The Children of the Kingdom shall go into outer Darkness.*

3. *If Religion do not revive, there will be great Judgments.* We have had many four Calamities Year after Year; and there has been a great deal of Consideration how to be delivered from the Wrath of God: And something has been done for the preventing of Wrath, but yet God's Anger is not turned away, but his Hand is stretched out still. One Judgment is scarce over, before another comes. We Pray, we Fast, make Laws, and dispute about Reformation, but yet we are in Affliction, and the Hand of God goes out against us: And so it will, unless there be a reviving of Religion. Mal. 4. 5, 6. *He shall turn the Hearts of the Fathers to the Children, and the Hearts of the Children to their Fathers, lest I come and smite the Earth with a Curse.* The Curse of hardness of Heart will not go alone: If God leave us to an hard Heart, that will be attended with other Curses.

James Lyman,
SERMON
Book D 4
And fourth

56 *The benefit of the Gospel,*

The Second Sermon.

Luke 4. 18.

To Preach the Gospel to the Poor.

IN these and the following Words, is set forth the Work that Christ was *anointed* for. First to *Preach the Gospel to the Poor*. Here mind, 1. *What he was to Preach*; that is, the *Gospel*. In *Isaiah* it is *good Tidings*. And so the *Greek* Word signifies, so our Word *Gospel* signifies. It comes from two *Saxon* Words: *God*, that signifies *Good*; and *Spell*, that signifies a *Word*. There be other good *Tidings*, but the *Gospel* is so by way of *Eminency*. The *Gospel* brings *Tidings* of the love of *God* to *Men*, and of a *Glorious* way of *Reconciliation* and *Salvation*. They are much to blame that slight the *Gospel*, and reject it. They carry as if the *Gospel* were not good *Tidings*. 2. *To whom he was to Preach*, viz. To the *Poor*. There be two sorts of *Poor*. 1. They that are low in the *World*.

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World: That are destitute of Riches; and the Invitations of the Gospel are sent to them as well as others; and they that receive it, are more generally of that sort. Cor. 1. 28. *God hath chosen the base Things of the World, and Things that are despised.* 1. Am. 2. 5. *Hath not God chosen the Poor of this World, Rich in Faith, Heirs of the Kingdom.* And Christ Jesus principally preached to such. Math. 11. 5. *The Poor have the Gospel preached unto them.* 2. Those that are poor in Spirit; that are sensible that they have nothing to purchase Heaven; that are sensible that they have no Money nor Price for their Salvation: And they are of two sorts. 1. Such as are legally Poor. As they, Math. 11. 28. *That Labour and are heavy Laden:* That are convinced of the wretchedness of their Hearts, and that God may justly Condemn them. 2. Such as are Evangelically Poor in Spirit. Such as have the Grace of Humility, and live upon the Mercy of God in Christ. Spoken of, Math. 5. 3. *Blessed are the Poor in Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.* Those that are called Poor here, are called Meek in Isaiah, C. 60. V. 1. Their Hearts are meekened, either by Conviction or by Grace. I don't exclude the

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the Later, but it seems to have a particular Respect to the Former.

DOCTRINE. *The Gospel is especially to be preached to the Poor in Spirit: They are particularly to be invited.* Consider here the two Propositions.

I Proposition. *The Gospel is to be preached to all.* Though there be no expectation that all will receive it, yet it is to be preached to all. Ministers are not bound to Preach it to every one in the World for that is impossible: But they are to Preach to all as they have Opportunity. They may not designedly hide the Gospel from any. There be many Differences among Men in respect of their Estates, Age, Covenant Interest and Sinfulness: But the Gospel is to be preached to them all. Christ did forbid his Disciples to go into the Way of the Gentiles, or to enter into any City of the Samaritans. Math. 10. 5. But this was a temporary Command: But now the Gospel is to be preached unto all. Mar. 16. 15. *Go into all the World, and Preach the Gospel to every Creature.* That is, every human Creature. Act. 20. 21. *Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks Repentance towards God, and Faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.*

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Christ. Gal. 3. 28. *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither Bond nor Free, there is neither Male nor Female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.* All are to be instructed in the Gospel, and to be invited to Christ.

1 Reason. *Because the Promise is to all.* There is a conditional Promise made to all that believe in Christ. There is no exception of any that do believe in Christ. The Sin against the holy Ghost shall not be forgiven. But the conditional Promise is true of them, and no Man knows that he hath committed that Sin. The offer of the Gospel is made to Men without any exception. It is propounded in general Terms, so as to comprehend all. Act. 10. 43. *Whosoever believeth on him, shall have Remission of Sins.* Men are ready to except themselves, but God makes no Exceptions. Sometimes the Promise is propounded Indefinitely. Joh. 3. 36. *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting Life.* But Sometimes it is propounded Universally; for there is no other Condition joined to this; and not only so, but the Notes of Universality are added to the Promise; as *whosoever*. Job. 3. 16. *So all.* Act. 13. 39. *And any.* Rev. 1. 20. *And therefore it must be preached to all.*

2 Reason.

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2 Reason. *They that are not Poor in Spirit, may receive Benefit by the Gospel.* The Gospel is many Ways useful to make Men Poor in Spirit. Preparation for Christ carried on by the Law and the Gospel Conjunction. When Men hear that there is a way of Salvation by Christ, that makes them more willing to see their Danger and not altogether so opposite to receive Conviction. It encourages them to Pray God to shew them their Misery. When Men hear that Christ died for our Sins that makes them sensible that God is very angry for Sin; that he will execute Vengeance. This is an evidence of the Justice and Severity of God. Men may learn from thence, that Sin is a great Offence, and must be punished. Luk. 23. 31. *If they cut such things in a green Tree, what shall be done in a dry?* When Men hear, that God so loves the World, that he gave his only begotten Son to suffer for them, that discovers the vile Nature of Sin, whereby Men abuse a Gift of such Grace. Psal. 130. 4. *There is Forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.* When Men hear that Christ hath redeemed us from the Curse, that may convince them that their own Works can't save them.

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em. Gal. 2. 21. *If Righteousness come by Law, then Christ is Dead in vain.* When they hear the Command to believe in Christ, that convinces them, that though they be Civil and Religious, yet if they believe not, they are Rebellious, and in a miserable Estate.

3 Reason. *Because they that are not Poor in Spirit now, may be Poor in Spirit afterwards.* If Men hear the Gospel, and don't make a right Use of it now, yet they will retain the Knowledge of it, and it may do them Service afterwards, though they are not sensible of their lost Condition now; that are Senceless, and carnally Confident, that they may be Poor in Spirit hereafter; and then what they have heard may come to Mind, and become powerful upon their hearts. It may be, when they have not an opportunity to hear the Gospel, they will call to Mind what they have heard some years before, and ponder on what has been preached to them formerly. It is possible they may be made Poor in Spirit, when they are in Captivity among the *Papists*, or *Heathens*. When they have no opportunity to hear the Gospel, or they may be made Poor in Spirit, when they lie upon

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a sick Bed, and cannot hear the Word preached; and then what they have formerly heard, may work effectually on them. *Manasseh* would not hearken to the Prophets when they spake to him. 2 Chron. 33. 10. But afterwards when he was a Captive in Babylon, he remembered what he had been taught, and repented. V. 12. *When he was in Affliction, he besought the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his Fathers.*

2 Proposition. *The Gospel is especially to be preached to the Poor in Spirit.* It is fit that Ministers should make particular Application of the calls of the Gospel to them. It is true, they may do so to young Men, to ancient Men and to great Sinners: But there is peculiar Reason to make particular Application to them that are *Poor in Spirit.* These Persons are in a particular Manner invited in the Scripture. *Isai. 55. 1. He that is Thirsty, come ye to the Waters and he that hath no Money; come ye, buy and eat, buy Wine and Milk without Money and without Price.* They are Thirsty they are parched up for want of somewhat to quench their Thirst. The like we have *Math. 11. 28, Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

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ary and heavy Laden, and ye shall find Rest
your Souls. They are Weary and heavy
den that are oppressed with the weight
God's Wrath. So, Rev. 22. 17. *The Spirit*
and the Bride say, Come. And let him that is a-
irst, Come: And whosoever will, let him take
Water of Life freely. God is here teach-
g Ministers to have a particular Regard
such. The Invitations are not confined
these, but they are to be particular ap-
ed to these. Some others have special
ed to have the Terroures of the Law
eached to them: But the Invitations of
e Gospel are especially to be propounded
those that are *Poor in Spirit*.

The Reason of this, is, *Not from any*
excellency in this poverty of Spirit. There is
nothing of Spiritual Goodness in this. It is
deed a reasonable Thing; it is accord-
ing to the dictates of right Reason, but
there is nothing of Piety or love to God,
godly Sorrow in it. It is a meer forced
ning, and accordingly it is not accepta-
e unto God. The first good Act that is
one by the Soul, is believing in Christ;
and accordingly there is no Promise made
the Scripture to this legal Poverty of Spi-
t. No Man is under any Promise of Sal-
vation

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vation till he comes to Christ. It is probable that God may give Grace to all those that have this Poverty of Spirit; but there is no Promise in the Word that he will. Indeed there is an inconsistency in it, that there should be any Promise made to him. For when a Man is Poor in Spirit, he owns that it is in God's liberty to do with him as he pleases: And he continues some time in this Frame, and continues to acknowledge it. But if there were any Promise of Salvation to it, then after the first Act of Submission, it would not be in God's liberty to do with him as he pleased; but he would be bound to bestow Grace upon him, and he might challenge and lay claim to Faith,

But the reason is, Because such Men are prepared to receive the Gospel. This Poverty of Spirit brings Men near to Christ so that it is very hopeful that they will expect of him. The People of the *Jews* needed the Ministry of *John* to prepare themselves to receive the *Messiah*. Mar. 1. 2. *I send my Messenger before thy Face, to prepare the Way before thee.* So particular Souls need the Work of Preparation to make way for their accepting of Christ. So *Paul*

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prepared. A&t. 9. 6. He Trembling and
astonished, said, *Lord, what wilt thou have*
me to do? So the *Failour*, A&t. 16. 30. He
said, *Sirs, What must I do to be saved?* And
when Men are thrown out of their own
confidences, and made Poor in Spirit,
now they are in a fair Way to receive
Christ; Now they are sensible that Pardon
and eternal Life are the free Gifts of God,
and therefore Christ to prepare the Angel
of the Church of *Laodicea*, convinces him
that he was *Poor, and Wretched, and Miserable,*
and Blind, and Naked. Rev. 3. 17. Yet
these Men don't accept of Christ, until
they have another Work of God upon the
heart. They are not fully prepared by this
legal Poverty of Spirit. There needs ano-
ther Work of God, further to prepare Men
before they will come to Christ. If a Man
were Poor in Spirit seven Year together,
that will not prevail with him to come to
Christ; but further to prepare him, his
eyes must be opened to see the Divine
Authority of the Gospel. 1 Thes. 2. 13.
When ye received the Word of God, which ye
heard of us, ye received it not as the Word of
men, but as it is indeed the Word of God, which
actually worketh in you that believe. Until
they

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they see the Glory of God and Christ, they will not believe. Psal. 9. 10. *They that know thy Name, will put their trust in thee.* But when they are Poor in Spirit, they are prepared to receive the Gospel, and give Entertainment to Christ.

1. *Now they see a want of Salvation.* Men that are seeking their Felicity in the World, and have not a sense of the Wrath of God, don't mind Christ. They take more Notice of the Market, and worldly Opportunities, than of gospel Invitation. Math. 22. 5. *They made light of it, and went one to his Farme, and another to his Merchandise.* But when they are Poor in Spirit, they are like *Thirsty Men*, that are ever parched up. Rev. 22. 17. *Let him that is athirst come.* They Tremble as Paul did. Act. 9. 6. *This is some Preparation.*

2. *Now they see that they can get Salvation in no other Way.* If Men have hope to Work out their Salvation themselves, they will not come to Christ. If they can cure their own Souls, they will not come to the Physician. If the Prodigal thinks that he can earn his Living, he will not return to his Father. Luk. 15. 15. *He went and joined himself to a Citizen of the Country.* But he

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Poor in Spirit, has tried all Conclusions, and every thing fails him. He sees himself a dead Man. Rom. 7. 9. Sin revived, and died. So he sees greater Necessity. This is a farther degree of Preparation.

I USE. Hence see, That those that are Poor in Spirit, do especially need to have the Law preached to them. It is useful to all sorts of Men to hear the Preaching of the Law. Saints stand in need of it to keep them Humble, to put them upon it to renew their Faith in Christ, and to make them Thankful: But especially such as are not Poor in Spirit. They need to be brought to Mount Sinai, and to hear the thundrings, and see the Lightnings. Secular Sinners don't love to hear the Terrours of the Law. They had rather be entertained with some more comfortable doctrine; but they are in great Necessity to hear the Law. If there had been no Law, there would have been no Necessity of the Gospel: And Men that are not sensible of the Terrours of the Law, will not regard the Invitations of the Gospel. Such are not Poor in Spirit, need to hear the Law often, that they may be prepared to receive the Gospel; that their Hearts may

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be broken and humbled. Gal. 3. 24. The Law was our Schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ.

1. That they may be sensible of the Terribleness of Damnation. Many Men are not aware what a terrible Thing it is to be Damned. They have a deeper Sense of Poverty and Reproach, than they have of Damnation. They look upon Hell as an uncomfortable Place: They think if it must be their Portion to go to Hell, they shall bear it as well as others; they are not like to go thither alone: They seldom think of it. They look upon it as a remote Thing at a great Distance, and it don't terrify them; but the Law discovers that it is Intollerable. Psal. 11. 6. Upon the Wicked God will Rain Snares, Fire and Brimstone, and a horrible Tempest. Isai. 30. 33. Tophet is prepared of Old; he hath made it deep and large, the Pile thereof is Fire and much Wood; the Breath of the Lord, as a stream of Brimstone, doth kindle it. Math. 25. 41. Depart ye Cursed, into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels. Math. 13. 42. He shall cast them into a Furnace of Fire, there shall be Weeping and gnashing of Teeth. Hence many Men are exceedingly terrified, and see the necessity

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The necessity of Deliverance. *Isai. 33. 14. Sinners in Zion are afraid, Trembling has surprized the Hypocrites: Who among us can dwell with devouring Fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting Burnings? If the sense of the terribleness of Damnation sinks into their Hearts, they won't regard the World, they won't stick at their Pains; they won't think much to part with their Sins: They had rather undergo any Sorrow than be Damned.*

2. *That they may be sensible of the great danger of Damnation.* Men are wont to soothe up themselves that God will not send them to Hell: He is Kind, and Gracious, and they Pray to him, and they are in Covenant, and enjoy Priviledges: They live Orderly, and are sorry for their Sins, and so they hope they are in no great danger. But the Law shews, that Sinners are under a Sentence of Condemnation. *Rom. 6. 23. The Wages of Sin is Death.* That God is very Angry with ungodly Men, *Psal. 50. 21, 22. I will Reprove thee, and set by Sins in Order before thee, Consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you to pieces, and there be none to deliver.* The Law shews, that the Threatning must be executed, The

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Law must take Place, that the Faithfulness of God is engaged for the fulfilling of the Law. Math. 5. 18. *Not one jot nor tittle shall pass from the Law, but all shall be fulfilled.* Hence many Men are afraid they shall not escape. They say as Mic. 6. 7. *Will the Lord be pleased with Thousands of Rams, or ten Thousands of Rivers of Oyl?* They are afraid there is no Mercy for them. They have a Fearful expectation of fiery Indignation. They have a dreadful Sound in their Ears as Job 15. 21. And their Hearts are Meditating Terror. They Confess, they Reform, they Cry, they Plead, but yet it Rings in their Ears, *Cursed is every one that continues not in all things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them.*

3. *That they may be sensible of the danger of sudden Destruction.* There is an Inclination in Men to put far away the evil Day, and then they think they may have a long Opportunity to enjoy worldly Comforts. Men see that God exercises Patience towards others, and they flatter themselves that he will be Patient towards them. But by the Law, they see that God will destroy many Sinners suddenly. 1 Thes. 5. 3. *When they say Peace and Safety, then sudden Destruction*

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ruetion cometh upon them, as Travail upon a Woman with Child, and they shall not escape. And the Law shews them, that God is very angry; that he sets their Iniquities before him, their secret Sins in the light of his Countenance: And so they are afraid God will not wait upon them. In the Evening they are afraid they shall die before Morning. If they find any bodily Indisposition, they are afraid they shall die. If there be a Thunder-Storm, they are afraid they shall be killed: Their Hearts shake at the report of Sickness that prevails: They tremble at the shaking of a Leaf. It is with them as Deut. 28. 66, 67. *Thy Life shall hang in suspense, and thou shalt fear Day and Night, and shalt have none assurance of thy Life. In the Morning thou shalt say, Would God it were Evening: And at Evening thou shalt say, Would God it were Morning; for the fear of thine Heart wherewith thou shalt fear,*

4. That they may be sensible of the justice of their Damnation. Men have abundance of Objections against the justice of God. They argue that Sins don't hurt God; he is happy for ever, notwithstanding their Sins. They object, that they could not prevent their Sins; they are according to the De-

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cree of God; that the Sin of *Adam*, that they did not consent to, was imputed to them, and so they were conceived in Sin and born in Iniquity. They object, that they have done Service, and that the Pains of Hell are intolerable. But the Law sheweth that their Damnation is just. Rom. 3. 19. *Whatsoever Things the Law saith, it saith to them that are under the Law: That every Mouth may be stopped, and all the World may become Guilty before God.* It is very evident from the Law, that Men have deserved Destruction, that they are worthy of Death, for they have broken an holy Law, and according to the Sentence of it, which is a Rule of Justice, they have merited Damnation. It is evident, that they are the proper Causes of their own Sins, and they have therein run upon the point of the Sword, and have thrown themselves into a Gulph of Misery. Hof. 13. 9. *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thy self.*

2 USE. Of warning to Sinners: Be not afraid to see that you are Poor. There is that maketh himself Rich, yet hath nothing. Prov. 13. 7. So it is with some in this Case. Rev. 3. 17. *Thou sayest thou art Rich, and increasest in Goods; and hast need of nothing.*

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but art Poor, and Wretched, &c. Men miserably deceive themselves by such Imaginations. Gal. 6. 3. *He that thinketh himself something when he is nothing, deceiveth himself.* It is Awful for Men to see themselves Poor: It is Frightful, but if you be Poor, it is best to see it. The Case of such Men is Doleful, but not Desperate. Such have no Foundation to trust in themselves; but they have Ground of Encouragement, for the Gospel is especially to be preached to them that are Poor in Spirit. In the Invitations of the Gospel, he hath a singular Regard to them. Luk. 4. 18. Your Condition is not the more Dangerous, but the more Hopeful, for seeing your selves Poor.

Consider, 1. *You are wholly empty of Goodness.* Some of you have considerable shews of Goodness. There is an Appearance of good Desires, gracious Sorrow, love to Ordinances and Sabbaths, and there is care to avoid Sin; but there is nothing of Goodness in all this. It can't be said of you, as of Jeroboam's Son, *There is some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel.* All that you do is in Hypocrisy. You are acted in your Religion by a Spirit of Self-love: Fear of Hell and hopes of Heaven are the great Prin-

Yours truly J. G. J.
1622

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Principles that influence you. You are acted by a Lust of Self-love in all your Religion. Psal. 78. 36. *They flattered him, and lyed to him with their Tongue. Their Heart was not right with him.* You make a considerable Profession, but God may say of you, as of them, Deut. 5. 29. *O that there were such an Heart in them.* All that ye do is for your selves. Hos. 10. 1. *If you be Swept and Garnished, yet you are Empty.* There is some similitude of Faith and Love, but no reality. There is not one spark of Goodness in your Heart; though Corruption be restrained, yet it Reigns; and so long as Corruption Reigns, there is a total want of Goodness. Faith is the first good Thing that is wrought in the Heart. You are afraid of Judgment; so are the Devils. Jam. 2. 19. *The Devils believe and Tremble.* You are much in Prayer, so would the Devils be, if they had hopes of Deliverance.

2. *You have no Power to do any Good.* You have Power to do all manner of External Duties, but you have no Power to keep the Law. Rom. 8. 7. *The natural Mind is not subject to the Law of God, neither indurated can be.* If you have the help of Ordinances, of Afflictions, of Deliverances of Ex-
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Examples; yet you cannot work up any gracious Frame in your own Heart. If there were a seed of Grace in your Heart, by being cherished, it might grow and flourish, but there is none. A Man that is in a Swoon, may be brought to be sensible, and to Walk and Work, but a Man that is Dead cannot: Thus it is with you. You are *Dead in Trespases and Sins*. Eph. 2. 1. A Watch, or a Clock, by Springs and Weights may move Briskly, but it has no Principle of Life. It is quite beyond you to do any spiritual Good. You can't receive the Gospel. There is Encouragement enough set before you, and it would be exceeding Profitable to you to receive it, but you cannot. You have not an Heart to receive it. Joh. 6. 44. *No Man can come unto me, except the Father that sent me draw him.*

3. *God is not bound to change your Heart.* God is absolutely free, he may help you, but if he won't, he is blessed for ever. It is true, he may help you without any Wrong to himself, but that lays him under no Necessity. It is in his Choice, whether he will Glorify his Justice or his Mercy on you: He may pass over you and take another Rom. 9. 16, *It is not of him that Willeth,*

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nor of him that Runneth, but of God that sheweth Mercy. God is under no Constraint to change your Heart; His Justice don't necessitate him. You have deserved Condemnation, and your Prayers and Tears lay no Bonds on the Justice of God. His Faithfulness don't necessitate him. He hath promised to Convert some, but there is no absolute Promise to any natural Man. His Mercy don't necessitate him. The merciful Nature of Man, doth many times force him to pity and help others, but God is wholly Voluntary in the Exercises of his Mercy. God is not of such a tender Heart, that he can't bear to see Men in Misery. God can take Pleasure in the Exercises of Justice. *Ifai. 1. 24. Ah, I will ease me of mine Enemies, and avenge me of my Adversaries.* His Honour don't necessitate him to Convert you. It would have been as much for his Honour to have converted *Esau* as *Jacob*, *Judas* as *Peter*, *Saul* as *David*. If he don't Convert you, he will be glorified for ever. You can't bring God under any Necessity to Convert you. If he doth not, he doth you no Wrong: You are in his Hands. He is the *Potter*, and you are the *Clay*; He may make you a Vessel of Honour or Dishonour. *Rom. 9. 21.*

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3 USE. Of *Exhortation to them that are poor to receive the Gospel*. If it were not offered to you, it would be Obtrusion and presumption, a thrusting of your selves upon Christ, it would be an impudent Thing. But God offers Mercy to you; *Hea in an especial Manner; as the Message concerning Christ's Resurrection was sent in a particular Manner to Peter. Mar. 6. 7. Go tell his Disciples, and Peter.* So he charges his Ministers to make a particular Application of the Gospel to you. *Luk. 4. 8. Isai. 55. 1. Rev. 22. 17.*

Consider 1. *It is not beyond his Mercy to Pardon you.* Salvation is a great Work. If your Sins had been fewer in Number, and smaller in their Nature and Aggravations, it would require great Mercy to Pardon and Save you. But as great as your Sins are, it is not beyond the Grace of God. You must beware that you *don't limit the Holy One of Israel. God is rich in Mercy. Eph. 2. 4.* His Grace is like the Ocean. It is sufficient to cover all your Sins. *Eph. 3. 18. To comprehend the Breadth, and Length, and Height, and Depth of the Love of Christ.* There are Three Dimensions that belong to Bodies; Here are Four ascribed to Mercy. Thick-

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Thicknes may be measured Downwards
so 'tis Depth; and Upwards, so 'tis Height.
Mercy brings Sinners from deep Misery,
to the Pinnacle of Happiness. God's Mer-
cy is greater than Man's. God can find
Mercy for such as Men cannot find Mercy
for. Hos. 11. 9. *I will not return to destroy*
Ephraim, for I am God and not Man. Isai.
55. 9. *For as the Heavens are higher than the*
Earth, so are my Ways higher than your Ways,
and my Thoughts than your Thoughts. God's
Mercies are greater than your Sins. Men
think if they had not sinned so much, or
so long, their Sin would not have been be-
yond God's Mercy. But God's Mercy can
Conquer all their Provocations. Grace may
prevail over all. Rom. 5. 21. *Grace reigns*
through Righteousnes, to eternal Life. The
Mercy of God is greater than we can con-
ceive of. The Understanding of Man is
large: We can conceive how many Mi-
nutes there be in a thousand Years; how
many Inches it is to the Center of the Earth,
but we can't comprehend the Love of
Christ Eph. 3. 19. *The Love of Christ passes*
Knowledge. We can't comprehend the Bit-
terness of the Cup that he Drank for our
sakes. We can't comprehend the Duration

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of his Love. We can't comprehend the great Good that he hath procured for us.

2. *God has designed to save many lost Sinners.* It is the purpose of his Heart, to bring many poor Sinners to heavenly Glory. If he had taken up a Resolution against it, Men might well be discouraged; but he has not resolved against it, neither is he at a loss what to do; he is not loth to do it: but it is his full Determination; he is resolved in his Way, and he purposes to break over all Objections, and Conquer all Oppositions. He is set in his Way, and will not be put out of it. 2 Thes. 2. 13. *God has chosen you to Salvation.* Gal. 1. 5. *Having predestinated us unto the Adoption of Children by Jesus Christ.* And he has done a great deal in order to the Salvation of such Sinners. The Price of it is paid. Sin laid a Bar in the Way, but that Bar is removed by the Death of Christ. There is no need of any Contrivance how to satisfy the Law, that is done already by Christ. God has sent Christ to save us. Gal. 3. 13. *Christ hath redeemed us from the Curse, being made a Curse for us.* And God makes a Proposal to you, and gives you liberty to be saved, if you will accept of Jesus Christ. He don't
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tell you that his Heart is hardned against you; but he tells you, that you shall be welcome, if you will come to Christ. Rev. 22. 17. *Whoſoever will, let him take the Water of Life freely.* Yea, he doth beſeech you to come for Salvation. God is of infinite Maieſty, yet he intreates you to be ſaved. He condeſcends to your Infirmitie, and ſtoops ſo low as to plead with you; He becomes as it were a Petitioner to you: He begs of you to come, and urges it as a Courteſie to come, with tender-heartedneſſe prayes you to come. 2 Cor. 5. 20. *We are Ambaſſadors for Chriſt, as though God did beſeech you by us; we pray you in Chriſts ſtead, be ye reconciled to God.*

3 *This is a principal Way, wherein God Glorifies himſelf.* The end of all Things is Gods Glory; and he hath done many great Things for his Glory. He made the World for his Glory, that his Power and Wiſdom might be manifeſted. He preſerved the holy Angels from Sinning, for the Glory of his Goodneſſe. He gave the Law for the Glory of his Holineſſe. He drowned the old World, ſaved Iſrael out of Egypt, deſtroyed Sodom, brought Judah from Babylon for his Glory. But this is a principal Way wherein

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He Gloryfies himself, in working out the
salvation of Sinners by Christ. There is a
great Manifestation of the *Trinity of Persons*
in the God-head. There is a Manifestation
of the Power, of the Justice, and of the ma-
nifold Wisdom of God, and of his unsearch-
able Grace. In this way he is greatly ex-
alted. Mic. 5. 18. *Who is a God like unto*
thee, pardoning Iniquity, and passing by the
transgression of the Remnant of his Heritage,
because he delighted in Mercy? Rev. 5. 12, 13.
Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive
power, and Riches, and Wisdom, and Honour,
and Strength, and Glory, and Blessing. And
every Creature which is in Heaven, and in the
earth, and under the Earth, and such as are
in the Sea, and all that are in them, heard I,
saying, Blessing, and Honour, and Glory, and
power be unto him that sitteth on the Throne,
and to the Lamb for ever and ever.

James Lynn

James Lynn

THE

82 *The benefit of the Gospel,*

The Third sermon

The Third Sermon

The Third sermon

Luke 4 18.

He hath sent me to Heal the Broken hearted.

TH E S E Words are an amplification of the Former; shewing the Effect of Preaching the Gospel to the Poor. Where 1. The Persons to be benefited, the *Broken-hearted*. The *Broken-hearted*, that is, those that are distressed because of Sin. This may be either from godly Sorrow, Psal. 34. 18. *The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a Broken-heart and saveth such as be of a Contrite spirit.* Or from a sense and apprehension of Misery and Danger. Prov. 15. 13. *By Sorrow the Heart, the Spirit is Broken.* Prov. 17. 22. *A merry Heart doth good like a Medicine, but a broken Spirit drieth the Bones.* And here seems to have a respect to those that are in Distress of Conscience. 2. The

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It was to bring to them, healing of them. There are two Cases, wherein Men stand in need of Healing. One is in Case of Sickness and Diseases. Psal. 103. 9. Who healeth all thy Diseases. The other is, in Case of Wounds. That is the Case here. Their Consciences are wounded. In Isaiah is, To bind up the broken in Heart. That is the manner of Surgeons in order to healing.

DOCTRINE. *There is Virtue in the Gospel to Heal wounded Consciences. As the Body of a Man, so the Conscience of a Man may be wounded in divers Degrees; but sometimes the Wounds of Conscience are very Dreadful. And it is a great Service to a Man to have those Wounds healed. This cannot be effected by other Means. Many Men have made tryal to little Purpose; but the Gospel is powerful that way. The Law wounds the Consciences of Sinners. 1 Cor. 9. 56. The Sting of Death is Sin; and the strength of Sin is the Law. But the Gospel heals their Consciences. The Gospel is of exceeding great Use otherwise; as it sanctifies the Hearts, and gives Men Power over Indwelling Sin. And this makes it very useful; that it Heals the Consciences.*

Handwritten note: That you will find in the

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it frees the Conscience from Grief, and the Terroure of Hell, and brings inward Peace and good Hope of eternal Life. Let the Wounds of Conscience be never so deep, yet by the Gospel they may be healed. God is the Author of Healings. Psalm 147. 3. *He healeth the broken in Heart, and bindeth up their Wounds.* But the Gospel is the Means. Rom. 15. 13. *The God of all Hope fill you with all Peace and Joy in Believing.* 1 Pet. 1. 8. *In whom, though now you see him not, yet Believing, ye Rejoyce with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory.* Hence the Gospel is called the Gospel of Peace. Rom. 10. 15. *How beautiful are the Feet of them that Preach the Gospel of Peace, that bring glad Tydings of good Things!* Eph. 6. 15. *And your Feet shod with the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace.* The Gospel is a means of Peace with God, and so of Peace of Conscience. Here I shall Premise two Distinctions.

1. *Between a stupified Conscience, and an healed Conscience.* Some Sinners have no Anguish in their Consciences. This rises from a stupid and senseless Spirit. They are under the Power of an Atheistical Principle. They have no sense of Eternal Things.

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Things. These Men know, that they are Corrupt, and Unregenerate; and that if the Scripture be true, they are Miserable. But they are besotted and benumbed, and don't feel inward Pain. Rom. 11. 8. *God hath given them the Spirit of deep Sleep and Slumber.* This Conscience differs from a Conscience that is healed: For a Conscience that is healed, is very sensible of Judgment, and the Wrath of God against Sinners, and the truth of the Threatnings; and the Reason of its quietness is not from Unbelief, but because his state is changed, and he is brought in to a state of Reconciliation with God. He perceives that God is at Peace with him, and so he Rejoyses in hope of Glory. Rom. 5. 1, 2. *Being justified by Faith, we have Peace with God, through the Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also we have access into this Grace wherein we stand, and Rejoyce in hope of the Glory of God.*

2. *Between a flattering Conscience, & an healed Conscience.* Some Men have quietness in their Consciences, from false Imaginations that they are at Peace with God. They have hopes of going to Heaven, and Apprehensions that God is reconciled to them,

either

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either from false Principles; So Papists and Quakers, and Arminians, they think such things will bring them into a state of Peace, as will not. Or from false Apprehensions that they are converted, and have Faith and Love. Prov. 30. 12. *There is a Generation that are pure in their own Eyes, yet are not cleansed from their Filibiness.* The Wounds of their Consciences are skinned over, and when they are inlightened, the Wound will open again; but when the Conscience is healed, Men are not under a Mistake; they have a good Foundation for their Hope. 2. Thes. 2. 16. *God hath loved us, and given us everlasting Consolation, and good Hope through Grace.* Many Men find religious Affections, and a Conscientious Care to please God, and get considerable Victory over Temptations, and have some superficial Joy in the hearing of the Gospel, and so they flatter themselves that the bitterness of Death is past. But when Conscience is healed, it is from an Application of the Blood of Christ.

Q. What must be done by the Man, in order to the Application of this healing Virtue?

A. 1. He must believe the offers of the Gospel to be true. Multitudes hear and read the Gospel

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pel, that have no benefit of its healing Virtue, because they don't believe it to be true. Heb. 4. 2. *The Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with Faith in them that heard it.* If the Gospel were not true, it would be no Foundation of true Peace, and many are at a loss about the truth of it. Their Minds are blinded. 2 Cor. 4. 4. *The God of this World hath blinded the Minds of them that believe not, lest the Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ should shine unto them.* They have Objections against the Gospel, and don't discern the truth of it, by the Testimony of God. But in order to the healing of their Consciences, they must be convinced of the truth of the Gospel, that Christ Jesus is the Son of God, that his Sacrifice has satisfied Justice, that God offers Mercy through him. The Word must come with a divine Authority. Men must hear the Voice of Christ. Christ must be revealed by the Father. 1 Thes. 2. 13. *We received the Word, as the Word of God.* Joh. 5. 25. *The Dead shall hear the Voice of the Son of God, and live.* Math. 16. 17. *Flesh and Blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father that is in Heaven.*

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2. *He must receive these Offers.* It is the Duty of Men to receive the Invitations of the Gospel, and that is necessary in order to Peace of Conscience. For if a Man don't receive the Gospel, the Word speaks Terror to him. Mar. 16. 16. *He that believeth not shall be damned.* Rom. 2. 8, 9. *To them that are Contentious, and obey not the Gospel, but obey Unrighteousness, God will render Indignation and Wrath.* 2 Thes. 1. 8. *Christ will come in flaming Fire, taking Vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of Jesus Christ.* If Men do not receive the Gospel, they are not at Peace with God. Whatever commendable Qualifications they have, they are not reconciled to God: And if they have not Peace with God, they cannot have true Peace of Conscience. The Office of Conscience, is to echoe to the Voice of God: Men must receive Christ. Joh. 1. 12. *To them that received him, gave he Power to become the Sons of God.* That brings them into an estate of Justification. Receiving of Christ is the Condition of the Gospel Covenant. The Redemption of Christ brings no saving benefit to them that don't receive him. Men must believe on him, that so they may have

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an interest in his Blood. God don't force the benefits of Christ on any Man, they must come to him. Math. 11. 28. *Come to me all ye that are Weary, and heavy Laden, and I will give you Rest.* These two Particulars always go together: Those that do believe the Gospel, do always receive Christ: The Mind and Will act in Conjunction.

3. *He must discern that he doth receive the Gospel.* Peace of Conscience riseth from an understanding of the truth of the Gospel, and that he himself hath closed with it. Men are capable to perceive that they have received it, and Conscience is very observant at such a time. It is a thing that the Heart is much concerned about; and generally they do take notice of it, and observe the very time. Some times they can roundly speak up to it. Joh. 9. 38. *Lord I believe.* Others do perceive it, though under more Uncertainty. The Consciences of Men have a reflecting Power, and may discern their own Actions. Conscience discerns Unbelief, and so Accuseth; and it discerns Faith, and so speaks Peace. Men are afterwards subject to divers Temptations; but generally they take some Notice

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tice of the Change that God has made in them; that they have been perswaded, and after much Opposition, have yielded to the calls of God. When God hath said, *Return ye backsliding Children, and I will Heal your Backslidings*, they have answered, *Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God.* As Jer. 3. 22.

2. Q. *How doth the Gospel apply its healing Virtue?*

A. 1. *It manifests, that God hath justified and accepted him.* This is the plain Conclusion from the Premises. The Gospel testifies, that he that believes is justified. Acts 10. 43. *To him give all the Prophets Witness through his Name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive the forgiveness of Sins.* God is reconciled to all believers. God that has authority to Pardon Sin, that is the Judge of the World, declares that he will be reconciled to believers; and Conscience affirms that he doth believe in Christ; he hath taken himself to Christ for Refuge. Sometimes this is more clear to him: He may say as Psal. 13. 5. *I have trusted in thy Mercy.* And so he concludes that God is reconciled to him. He is delivered from Condemnation according to that, Joh. 5. 24.

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that seeth the Son, and believeth on him that sent him, hath everlasting Life, and shall not enter into Condemnation, but is passed from Death to Life. So he concludes that God is his Father, that his Sins are cast into the depths of the Sea; that God will bestow heavenly Blessedness upon him; his Conscience echoes to the Voice of God, and pronounces him an Heir of Glory; and so he rejoiceth in hope of the Glory of God. Rom. 5. 1.

2. The Gospel manifests, that it is agreeable to the Law, that he doth justify. Formerly he he was dreadfully scared with the Law, 1 Cor. 15. 56. The Sting of Death is Sin, and the strength of Sin is the Law. He considered that the Law must be fulfilled. Math. 5. 18. Not one jot or tittle must pass from the Law, but all must be fulfilled. But the Gospel gives a clear Account that Christ has satisfied the Law. That the Law did allow a Mediatour. Gal. 3. 17. The Covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the Law which was four Hundred and thirty Years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the Promise of none effect. That the Curse of the Law was executed on Christ. Gal. 3. 13. He hath redeemed us from the Curse.

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ing made a Curse for us. Christ Jesus suffered for our Sins. 1 Cor. 15. 1. *Christ died for our Sins, according to the Scriptures.* Isa. 53. 6. *He was wounded for our Transgressions, and bruised for our Iniquities.* Hereby the Soul is satisfied that God may save him without any Contradiction to the Rule of Justice. All the Challenges of the Law have been answered by Christ, so that now the Threatnings of the Law are not a Terror to him. He sees the Debt is paid, the Account is cancelled; it is according to a Rule of Righteousness that he should be saved. The Law lays no Bar in the way. Rom. 3. 26. *God is Just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.* Rom. 3. 31. *Do we then make void the Law through Faith? God forbid: Yea, we establish the Law.*

I USE. Hence learn the Preciousness of the Gospel. The Gospel is called Glorious. 2 Cor. 4. 4. *It is called the Word of God's Grace.* Act. 20. 32. *I commend you to God and the Word of his Grace.* It is called the good Word of God. Heb. 6. 5. *Have tasted the good Word of God.* The Promises of it are called, *exceeding great and precious Promises.* 2 Pet. 1. 4. And, truly on this Account the Gospel is precious, that it heals wounds.

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Consciences. The *Balm of Judea* is counted precious, because of its healing Virtue. So the Gospel is to be prized because of its *Curative Power*, that it heals the Wounds that Sin has made in the Conscience. There be a great many that hear the Gospel, that are not healed, but thousands have been healed by it. Every Man that doth receive it, is healed thereby, whatever their Terrours were.

I Consider. *These Wounds can't be healed any other way.* Some other things can stupefy the Conscience, and skin the Wounds over, but nothing but the Gospel can cure them. Mic 6. 6. 7. *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord; and bow my self before the high God? Shall I come before him with Burnt-offerings, or Calves of a Year Old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of Rams, or ten thousands of Rivers of Oyl? If a Man should Weep Day and Night, that will not do. If he should give all his Goods to the Poor, that will not do. If he should walk in Print, that will not do. These Wounds do reject all other Medicines. Rom. 3. 20. By the deeds of the Law, shall no Flesh living be justified in his Sight. If a Man should with Anna, serve God with Fastings and Prayers*

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Night and Day; if he should with Paul go Preaching the Gospel from *Jerusalem* round about unto *Illyricum*, if he should with *Elijah* be very jealous for the Lord of Hosts; if he should confess his Sins with Tears of Blood; if he should give his Body to be burned, it would not do. The biting of the fiery Serpent could not be healed, but by looking to the brazen Serpent. So there is nothing can allay the Venom of these Wounds, but the Gospel. Many Men try many Conclusions, but their Wounds Stink and are Corrupt. There is no Soundness in their Flesh, because of God's Anger, nor any Rest in their Bones, because of their Sins. Their Bones wax Old through their Roaring all the Day, and their Moisture is turned into the drought of Summer, till the Virtue of the Gospel is applied unto them. Joh. 14. 27. Peace I leave with you, my Peace I give unto you: Not as the World giveth, give I unto you. Heb. 9. 26. How much more shall the Blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself to God, purge your Consciences from dead Works?

1. 2. These Wounds are full of Anguish. Many Men have such Wounds in their Consciences.

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nces, as are exceeding hard to bear. Their
ins are like Ghosts, gashly to behold, when
God sets them in order before Men. The
Wrath of God is hard to bear: It lies like
Mountain of Lead upon the Soul; and
Terrorours take hold of them like Waters;
when the Arrows of the Almighty are
within Men, the Poison of them drinks up
their Spirits, and they have a dreadful
ound in their Ears. Job 15. 21. Their
Hearts are as heavy as Lead, their Sorrows
pierce them as with the piercings of a
sword. The Wrath of God searches like
fire; they are in an amazed Condition.
Other Afflictions are hard to bear, these
are harder. Men may bear up under other
sorrows, but these sink the Soul. Prov. 26.
4. *The Spirit of a Man can sustain his In-
firmity; but a wounded Spirit who can bear?*
They cry out in Distress. Isai. 33. 14. *Who
among us can dwell with devouring Fire?*
Yet the Gospel can heal these Wounds,
and turn their Mourning into Dancing,
and turn their Sorrow into Joy, that they
shall Sing for Joy.

3. *If these Wounds be not healed here, they
never will be healed.* There is great necessity
that Mens Consciences should be healed

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now in this World. It is a doleful Thing for these painful Wounds to continue several Months; more Doleful for them to continue, as sometimes they do, some Years. But there lies great necessity upon Men to get these Wounds healed quickly, for if they be not healed here, they never will be healed. If Men go with the Wounds out of this World, they will abide for ever. Their Guilt will remain for ever, and the Wrath of God will be poured out on them for ever. What can heal them in the other World? The Punishment that they sustain, will not take away their Guilt. They will never be able to pay their Debts, and satisfy divine Justice; for they deserve everlasting Punishment; for that they will be sentenced unto. Math. 25. 41. *Depart ye Cursed, into everlasting Fire.* And as long as their Guilt continues, their Wounds will continue. Yea, their Wounds will be fuller of Anguish then, Conscience will be much more sensible then, than it is now. Now they have many outward Enjoyments that do help to stupify Conscience. Now they have abundance of carnal Reasonings and flattering Hopes, that give them some ease. Now their Understandings are more Dark-

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but in the other World, these Wounds will be fuller of Anguish than now; they will have more Understanding then of the greatness and Majesty of God; they will be stripped out of all their carnal Enjoyments; they will know and remember all their Sins: They will have Experience of Divine Vengeance; they will Drink of the Wine of God's Indignation. There will be more Revelations of his Wrath to them, & they shall be utterly without Hope, and see an impossibility of Deliverance. Mar.

9. 44. *There the Worm dieth not.*

4. *These Wounds are so healed by the Gospel, that they shall never prove Mortal.* The Gospel doth the thing effectually. It is with these Wounds indeed, as it is with bodily Wounds and broken Bones; after they are healed, they sometimes Ake against change of Weather, but yet they shall not prove Mortal. A Man whose Conscience is healed, shall never die of his Wounds. If the Wounds of Conscience be not healed, they will issue in Ruine; but if the healing Virgine of the Gospel be applied to them, the Men are delivered from Destruction; they may have Pain sometimes, but their Life is safe. Col. 3. 3. *Your Life is hid with Christ*

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in God. Joh. 5. 24. They are passed from Death to Life. Rom. 8. 1. There is no Condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. If Conscience be healed, and acquits from their Guilt, their Sins shall never be charged upon them, and shall never prove a Discouragement to them, so as to make them forsake Christ, nor fall into a way of Unbelief.

2 USE. Of Examination, *whether the Wounds of your Consciences have been healed.* Some Mens Consciences are more quiet than they were. There was a time when you were mightily terrified; you could not rest Day nor Night; your Sins were set in order before you, and the Wrath of God was terrible to you; the Terroures of the Almighty set themselves in array against you, and you had amazing Fears: Some times you feared that your Day of Grace was past; sometimes that the Spirit of God had left you; sometimes that you had committed the unpardonable Sin; sometimes that you should die before Morning. It was Dreadful to think of Dying, and the end of all Opportunities, of going in your Sins before the Judgment-Seat; of lying among Devils; of unquenchable Fire. You were amazed to think how you should spend

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Day, and then how you should wear out the Night, and how you should grapple with eternal Misery; but now the case is altered, and you are not under such Fears; you live quietly and hope to go to Heaven. The thoughts of Death are not such a Terror to you as they were: But there may be ease of Conscience where there is no Healing. Some Mens Consciences are not healed, but stupified. The Wounds of some Mens Consciences are only skinned over, not cured. You may know it by this: When they are indeed healed, they are always healed by the Gospel.

If it were by the Gospel, then you were convinced that nothing else would Heal you. Before Men feel the Efficacy of the Gospel, they must be beaten off from all false hopes. Men may see that their Hearts are very bad, and a great deal of Rottenness and Hypocrisy in themselves, and much of the insufficiency of their own Righteousness, yet not be prepared to receive the offers of Christ, and depend on his Righteousness. There be particular Convictions of the wretchedness of Mens own Hearts, for Months going. They may see more and more of the desperate Wickedness that is

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in their Hearts, and yet they not be brought out of themselves. But before they come to Christ for healing, they must be convinced of the incurableness of their Wounds by any other Medicine. If they can help themselves by Prayers, Desires, Sorrows Inlargements, they will neglect Christ. They will never come to Christ, till they are reduced to Extremity. If they can make a shift to ease their Consciences with their Priviledges & Performances, they may counterfeit Faith in Christ, but they will neglect him. They must see themselves Dead. Rom.

7. 9. *Sin revived and I died* Their strong holds must all be thrown down. 2 Cor. 10. 4.

The weapons of our Warfare are mighty, to the pulling down of strong holds. Men must be empty of themselves, and all Refuges must fail them, before they will come to Christ.

2. *If it were by the Gospel, it was by the spiritual Discovery of the Grace of God, and the Virtue of Christ's Blood.* There is a two-fold common Discovery of the Virtue of Christ's Blood: One is from the strength of Reason. Men can argue from many Tokens that it must be so, from the Miracle that he wrought, from his Resurrection, from the consent of the Old Testament,

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And thus the generality of those that are called Christians, have some perswasion of it. Like them, Joh. 2. 23. *Many believed on his Name, when they saw the Miracles that he did.* The other is by more than ordinary Illuminations. Some carnal Men have a superficial Illumination. Heb. 6. 4. *Some that have been inlightned fall away.* Math. 13. 20. *They receive the Word with Joy, but have not Root in themselves.* This Illumination is like a flash of Lightning; it affects Men at present, but wears off after a while. But when their Consciences are healed by the Gospel, they are indeed convinced. There is a spiritual Discovery of the saving Virtue of the Blood of Christ. *They see his Glory, as the Glory of the only begotten of the Father.* Joh. 1. 14. So Christ was revealed in Paul, Gal. 1. 16. God gives the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation in the Knowledge of him. The Blindness of the Mind must be removed before Men will receive the Gospel. Men must hear God calling them, before they will come to Christ. And such Persons have not only a spiritual Discovery of Christ, when their Consciences are first healed, but afterwards they are wont to have further Discoveries.

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coveries thereof, whereby they are helped to renew their Dependance on the Blood of Christ.

3. *If it were by the Gospel, then the Diseases of their Hearts are healed also.* When the Gospel is received, it has not a great power over the Conscience only, but over the Heart also. As it delivers the Conscience from the guilt of Sin, so it delivers the Heart from the power of Sin. It doth not only Comfort, but it Purifies the Man. The Gospel teaches us *to deny Ungodliness, and worldly Lust; and to live Soberly, Righteously and Godly, in this World.* 2 Tit. 11.

12. And wherever the Gospel is indeed received, it has a mighty Efficacy to renew the Heart. Those that know the Grace of God, and Excellency of Christ, are thereby inclined to carry Holily. Some Men get a false Peace by common Illuminations, and that occasions strong Affections, Sorrow for Sin, delight in Ordinances, care of their Conversation for a time; but before it be long, their Corruptions revive like Snakes in the Spring. Luk. 8.

13. *For a while they believe, and in time of Temptation they fall away.* But if the Conscience is healed, the Diseases are cured.

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The Heart is changed; the Man has a Spirit of Love to God; he has such a sight of God and Christ, as gives Life to him. 2 Cor. 5. 17. *If any Man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new Creature: Old things are past away, and all things are become New.* As the sight of God and Christ inclines the Soul to trust in him, so to Love and Fear him. Joh. 5. 25. *The Dead shall hear the Voice of the Son of God, and live.*

3 USE. Of Direction what Course to take, that your Consciences may be healed. Some Men are distressed by reason of the Wounds of their Consciences. Prov. 18. 14. *A wounded Conscience who can bear?* And they are willing to take a great deal of Pains in order to their healing. They would be contented to bear bodily Pains, to part with a great deal of Money, if that would effect the thing; to give *Thousands of Rams.* Mic. 6. 7. The *Papists* take great Pains, Torment their Bodies, are at great Expence: And many among our selves, Reform their sinful Carriages that were dear to them; are very laborious in seeking God, and striving with their own Hearts; but the way to get your Consciences healed, is to receive the Gospel. There must

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be Reformations and Supplications, but the principal Thing is to receive the Gospel, and yet the Blood of Christ applyed to the Soul. It is the Blood of Christ that washes away Sin. 1 Joh. 1. 7. *The Blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God cleanses us from all Sin.* This is the price of our Redemption; receive therefore the offers of the Gospel.

And in order to this,

1. *Dispair of getting a Cure in any other way.* There is a great endeavour in Men to get something of their own to pacify the Anger of God. They are sensible that they cannot perform the Condition of the Covenant of Works: They cannot perfectly keep the Law, yet they hope to get something of their own to commend them to God's acceptance. They hope that their Sorrow, and their Desires, and Affections, and Reformations will moderate the Anger of God, and contribute somewhat to the pacifying of his Anger. They think God can't but delight in those things, and can't be so Angry with them as he was. They hope that their own Obedience doth take something with God, and incline his Heart towards them, and render them

more

but more acceptable to God than they were. They go about to establish their own Righteousness; but you must be convinced of the vanity of this Confidence; all their strong holds must be thrown down, that your tears and Affections will do nothing, that they can't incline God to pity you; you must find by Experience, such Defects and Corruption in all your Services, and such Wretchedness in your Heart, as shall make evident to you, that you cannot help your self. Your Conscience must speak as God speaks, that it is fair for God to cast you off; as Righteous to reject you, as if you had never made a Prayer or shed a tear for your Sins. That whatever you have done, you have laid no bonds on God to save you. That you can do nothing to force God to save you; but you are after all at God's free Disposal. You must see that you are *without Strength*, Rom. 5. 6, *that God is the Potter, and you are the Clay*, Rom. 9. 21.

2. Consider, *That it is God that offers saving to you in the Gospel.* You hear Men inviting and encouraging you to come to Jesus Christ; and you are perswaded that they are Men of Understanding, and that they

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they do judge in their Hearts that is a sufficient way of Salvation; but you cannot depend on the Judgment of Men, they will not satisfy your Conscience, though Men think there is healing Virtue in the Blood of Christ: But God doth testify to it, Dan. 9. 24. *Christ will finish Transgression, and make an end of Sins, and make Reconciliation for Iniquity.* Rev. 5. 9. *Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy Blood.* And he freely offers this unto you, and is ready to pardon all your Sins through Christ Jesus. Do but believe that it is God that speaks in the Gospel, and you will feel Encouragement enough: Then you will be satisfied in the Mercy of God; then you will be satisfied in the Faithfulness of the Promise; then you will be satisfied in the sufficiency of Christ's Redemption and not be afraid to trust in him. 1 Thes. 2. 13. *Ye received the Word, not as the Word of Men, but (as it is indeed) the Word of God, which effectually worketh in them that believe.*

John 1. 12

*Shall
repent*

The Fourth Sermon.

Luke 4. 18.

Preach Deliverance to the Captives.

HERE is another Expression of the Work that Christ was anointed for, Where mind, 1. The Persons at he is to be Serviceable to. The Word *Captive* is from *Capio*, to take. They are such as are taken in War. *Aichmalotos* is from *Aichme*, Spear or Sword, and *Alotos*, taken in War. This sets forth the state of sinners. They are by the just Judgment of God, delivered into Satans Hands, & they are his Captives. 2 Tim. 2. 26. *They are taken Captive by him at his Will.* 2. What service Christ was to do for them. *To Preach Deliverance*, to Publish or Proclaim it. His office was not meerly to Condole their captivity, but to Proclaim Deliverance to them. He doth not Proclaim that they are delivered, but he Proclaims an Offer of

Des
God save Loved the world
the same his only begotten son
to die for them

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Deliverance. He declares that there is way of Deliverance, and makes a tender of it upon Terms.

DOCTRINE. *God offers Deliverance to those that are in spiritual Captivity.* Deliverance to them that are in bodily Captivity is a great Priviledge; but Deliverance to them that are in spiritual Captivity, is far greater Priviledge. As it is more Costly, so it is more Comfortable and Profitable; but this is freely offered by God. He doth not force their Deliverance without their Consent, but he makes a tender of Deliverance unto them. They cannot force their Deliverance, neither can they purchase their own Deliverance. *What shall Man give in exchange for his Soul?* Math. 16. 26. But God doth freely offer it to them. He doth not at present make an offer of it to all the World. There be great Nations that have not heard of it; but where he sends his Gospel, he makes an offer of it. There be many in such Places that are not delivered from this Captivity and indeed never will be delivered; but it is not for want of an offer, but for want of their Acceptance. Some that are in Captivity are delivered, and Deliverance offered unto others.

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Q. *Why are Sinners said to be in spiritual captivity?*

A. *Because their Condition is resembled by the Condition of Captives.*

1. *They are made to serve with Rigour.* Thus the Egyptians dealt with the Israelites. *Exod. 1. 14. They made their Lives Bitter with hard Bondage, in Morter and in Brick, and in all manner of Service in the Field. All the Service wherein they made them serve, was with Rigour. So Satan puts his Captives to a great deal of Drudgery. He keeps them continually at Work. He hurries them from Service to Service. He makes them do a great deal of base Work, that is beneath the Dignity of Men. He makes them to Idolize the World, and to make Gods of their Bellies. Phil. 3. 19. He makes them Lye, and Steal, and be Prophane. He makes many of them to be like the Beasts that Perish.*

2. *He drives them sometimes to do things that will be a Reproach to them, that they are as the Fools in Israel. 2 Sam. 13. 13. He makes them to do such things as unto them in this World. Prov. 6. 33. A Wound and Dishonour shall he get, and his Reproach shall not be wiped away. He compels them to do such things as are utterly Unprofitable.*

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Unprofitable, and forces them to do things that displease God, and bring down his Wrath. He hurries them on to do things that Wound their Consciences. He will not allow them time, nor suffer them to serve God. Eph. 2. 2, 3. *Ye walked according to the Course of this World, according to the Prince of the Power of the Air, the Spirit that now worketh in the Children of Disobedience. Among whom we had our Conversation in times past, in the Lusts of the Flesh, fulfilling the Desires of the Flesh, and of the Mind.*

2. *They are miserably provided for.* Sometimes it is so with Captives among Men. Deut. 28. 48. *Thou shalt serve thine Enemies which the Lord shall send against thee, in Hunger, and Thirst, and Nakedness, and in the want of all things.* So Isai. 20. 4. *So the King of Assyria shall lead the Egyptians Prisoners and the Ethiopians Captives; Young and Old Naked and Barefoot.* Thus these Mens Souls are in a starved Condition; they have nothing to satisfy them; they are like the Prodigal, Luk. 15. 16. *He would fain have filled his Belly with the Husks that the Swine did eat, but no Man gave unto him.* They have no Heavenly Manna; they don't eat of the Tree of Life, spoken of, Rev. 22.

much of the same

to the wounded in Spirit. III

They have not that which is *Meat indeed*, and *Drink indeed*. They have insatiable Desires after Happiness; but they have nothing to live upon, but that which is Course, and Bitter, and Unsatisfying. They have Desires after Satisfaction, but cannot find it. They are kept in an Hungry and Starved Condition. While other Men are entertained in God's Chambers, they are kept out of Doors. They come into the Meeting-house, but not into the Chambers of Communion; and their Souls are miserably Cloathed, while others are Cloathed with change of Raiment, and their Beauty Perfect through that Comeliness which God hath put upon them, and are adorned with the Robes of Christ's Righteousness. These poor Captives have nothing but rotten Rags to cover them, while their Bodies are finely adorned, their Souls are naked and Filthy: They are *Polluted in their Blood*. Ezek. 16. 6. All their Righteousness is as filthy Rags.

3. *Satan is leading them to his own Territories*. That is the manner of Conquerours when they have taken Captives, to lead them away to their own Country. So *Zerubbabab* was dealt with. Jer. 52. 11. *The King*

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King of Babylon bound him with Chains, and carried him to Babylon. Thus Satan is dealing with these Men. The Diuel himself is cast into Hell. 2 Pet. 2. 4. *God spared not the Angels that Sinned, but cast them down to Hell.* And though they be suffered to Ramble about the Earth, yet Hell is their Home; and thither it is that they are leading their Captives. The Diuel is leading them in those Paths that go down to Destruction. 1 Joh. 3. 8. *He that committeth Sin is of the Diuel.* He leads them on in the Practice of Iniquity, which is the very way to Hell. He leads some in the way of Profaneness, others in the way of Voluptuousness, others in a way of Pride and Worldliness, till he brings them down to Hell. *The Diuel deceives them,* Rev. 20. 10. *He destroys them,* Rev. 9. 11. And he is busily endeavouring to hinder them from getting out of this way. When they hear the Word, he is careful to take it away. Math. 13. 19. *Then cometh the wicked One, and catcheth away that which was sown in his Heart.* He mightily opposeth their Conversion. He is shewing them the Glory of the World, and blinding their Eyes, that they may not believe the Gospel. 2 Cor. 4. 4. *The Gospel*

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this World hath blinded the Eyes of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the Image of God, should shine unto them.

2 Q. *What is it that is offered to these Captives?*

A. *Not a Mitigation of the Extremity of their Captivity, but Deliverance.* It is a Mercy to poor Captives, to have some Pity shewed them in their Bondage. Psal. 106. 46. *He made them to be pitied of all those that carried them Captive.* And indeed there is some difference among those that are Satan's Captives. Some are made to do abundance more Drudgery than others: They are made to blast their Names, and wound their Consciences more than others, and they go along faster in the way to Destruction than others: But the thing that God offers to Men in the Gospel, is not a Mitigation of, but Deliverance from Captivity. Christ Jesus is raised up to be a Deliverer, to be a Saviour, and he doth deliver Men. His Work is to deliver them, who through fear of Death, were all their life-time subject to Bondage Heb. 2. 15. and this is that which is offered in the Gospel. He offers to make them Happy

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that

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that were Miserable, to save them from the power of Satan. Act. 26. 18 *To turn them from Darkness to Light, and from the power of Satan unto God. To deliver them from the power of Darkness,* Col. 1. 13. He offers to set at Liberty, those that were in Bondage.

1. *He doth not offer Deliverance hereafter only, but present Deliverance.* God offers the Glory of Heaven to Sinners in the Gospel; but this is not to be enjoyed at present, but they must go through several Calamities before they come thither. 1 Pet. 5. 10. *God has called you to his Eternal Kingdom and Glory after ye have suffered a while.* They may have some fore-tastes of it now, but they must not enjoy it till they Die. But there is a present Deliverance offered, he that is effectually called, is the Lord's Free-Man. 1 Cor. 7. 22. Satan's Dominion is immediately taken away. The Man is delivered from servitude to Satan. 1 Joh. 5. 18. *He that is begotten of God, keepeth himself, and that wicked One toucheth him not.* The Diuel may hurry him into some Transgressions, but his Lordship is taken away and the Man walks in a way of Holiness and has a right to the Tree of Life.

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tan is cast out, and the Man is made an Heir of Heaven, and God is leading him in the way to Glory. Rom. 6. 22. *Ye have your Fruit unto Holiness, and the End everlasting Life.*

2. *He don't offer Deliverance for the present only, but Eternal Deliverance.* Men that are delivered out of Captivity here, may after a while go into Captivity again, and be in as sad a Condition as before; but this Deliverance is Eternal. When once they are delivered, they are never brought into such a Captivity again. Paul says indeed, that *the Law in his Members brought him into Captivity.* Rom. 7. 23. The meaning is, That Sin did get some Advantage, and Tyrannize over him a while, that he was at times like a Captive; but not as he was before in his natural Condition. He never was a Servant to Sin any more. The Devil may try to recover his Dominion; he acts Craftily, and makes many Assaults, and brings the Heart into bad Frames, and leads it into actual Transgressions, but he has no power over him to make him walk in the way of Destruction. Such Persons being the Sons of God, are led by the Spirit of God. Rom. 8. 14. Satan is very much

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restrained by God, and all such Persons are kept by the power of God, through Faith unto Salvation. 1 Pet. 1. 5.

3 Q. On what Terms doth God offer Deliverance from this Captivity?

A. 1. Not upon the Condition of their laying down the Price of their Deliverance. We can't lay down any Price of our Redemption. Money will not Redeem us, if it should be laid out in Works of Piety or Charity. Math. 16. 26. *What shall a Man give in Exchange for his Soul?* Men have no Works to Redeem them; all the Works that they do before their Deliverance, are Sins. They run in Debt, and don't pay their Debts thereby, until they are delivered. They are by all that they do, purchasing Damnation, and not Salvation. They are said to have no Money, Isai. 55. 1. Nothing that will pass in Heaven, as Money doth upon the Earth.

2. Not upon Condition of their Recompening God for it afterwards. When he delivers Men, he expects that they should serve God in Holiness and Righteousness all the Days of their Lives. Luk. 1. 74, 75. But this is not the Condition, but part of the Mercy that is offered. Men that are sensible of their Guilt,

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tivity, are ready to promise, That if God will deliver them, they will be very Obedient, and shew forth his Praise: But God don't regard their Promises, nor deliver them because they promise fairly. He expects no Reward from them, as in that Case. *Isai. 45. 13. He shall let go my Captives, not for Price nor Reward, saith the Lord of Hosts.* God requires Obedience as a natural Debt, and likewise in a way of Thankfullness for their Deliverance, but not in a way of Recompence.

3. *But on Condition of accepting it as a free Gift through Christ.* Deliverance is a free Gift as to us, but Christ hath purchased it. *Rom. 6. 23. The Gift of God is Eternal Life, through Christ Jesus our Lord.* And we must accept it as such. The Invitation is, *to come and take the Water of Life freely. Rev. 22. 17.* And we must take as it is offered; we must make no Alteration in the Terms: God will have his own way: He will not sell Deliverance to us but he will give it; but he will not give it absolutely without respect to any Price, but with respect to the Death and Righteousness of Christ. And we must receive it as he offers it. *1 Pet. 1. 21. Who by him do believe*

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believe in God. Heb. 7. 25. He is able to save them to the uttermost, who come unto God by him. We must depend on the Grace of God, as the moving Cause, but on the Blood and Righteousness of Jesus Christ, as the meritorious Cause of our Salvation.

4 Q. *To what purpose is this offer made to Sinners, seeing they have not Power to accept of it? Joh. 6. 44. No Man can come unto me, except the Father that sent me draw him.*

A. 1. *It is no ways fit that Salvation should be forced on them without their acceptance. In this way they put a great deal of Honour upon God: They Honour the Grace of God, and his Faithfulness, and his Authority. Rom. 4. 20. Abraham was strong in Faith, giving Glory to God. It is a Testimony for God, and a practical Acknowledgment of his Attributes; and in this way they put a great deal of Honour upon Christ. It is a Confession that he is the Son of God, and the only Mediatour between God and Man; of the Sufficiency and saving Virtue of his Death and Obedience: It manifests that the Man prizeth Christ. 1 Pet. 2. 7. To them that believe Christ is Precious. And in this way there*

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is a Foundation for a great deal of Comfort. God is bound now by Covenant to bestow Salvation, and they are secured from Apostacy: That they shall never fall into a state of Condemnation. Joh. 5. 24. *He that seeth the Son, and believeth on him that sent him, hath Eternal Life, and shall not enter into Condemnation.* The Heirs of Promise hereby have strong Consolation.

2. *They can do a great deal in order to their accepting of Deliverance.* They can Pray earnestly for it. Prov. 2. 3. *They can cry for Wisdom, and lift up their Voices for Understanding.* God saith concerning Paul, *Behold he Prayeth.* A&T. 9. 11. They can Reform their Lives, and leave off the Evil Practices that they have been addicted unto. So they are directed to *forsake their ways,* Isai. 55. 7. They can addict themselves to ways of Obedience, duties of Piety, and Charity, and Justice. They can resist Discouragements, and discern that there is no sufficient Foundation for them; they are able to examine their Hearts, and to discern the Falseness of those Pretences that they make to Godly Sorrow, Love and Faith; they are capable to discern their Carnal Confidence, and to find out the

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Pride and Stubbornness of their Hearts. They are able also to justify God, and under a sense of their own Insufficiency, wait upon God for his Mercy.

3. *When they do what they can, God generally makes the offers Powerful.* When they are prepared, God's manner is to open their Eyes. When they have gone as far as they can, God's manner is to put Strength in them, and he will accompany the Gospel with a Divine Power. *The Gospel doth become his Power unto Salvation, Rom. i. 16.* He teaches them in that way, and makes them to come to Christ. *Joh. 6. 45. Every one that heareth and leearneth of the Father, cometh unto me.* In this way, God is Breathing into some the Breath of Life. These offers of the Gospel are not in vain, for God doth perswade many thereby. *1 Cor.*

4. *15. I have Begotten you through the Gospel.*

USE. See here the great Mercy of God to many Sinners. He offers Deliverance to them from Spiritual Captivity. Bodily Captivity, especially among barbarous People, Indians or Turks, is a great Misery; but this Spiritual Captivity is much greater. Their Wants are very great; they live a miserable

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miserable Famished Life, they are destitute of those Spiritual Comforts that the Nature of Man craves. They are very much Debased, they live in such a way as is beneath the Dignity of Mankind. They endure abundance of Sorrows, and Wounds in their Consciences. They are exposed unto great Dangers: God pities them in this Condition, and offers Deliverance to them, when none else could do it. He is making a gracious Offer unto them. You are utterly incapable to deliver yourselves; you have no sufficiency to procure your own Liberty. Some that have been Captives to Men, have got their Liberty by Running; some by being Victorious over them; some by promising Money for their Redemption, but you are under an utter Incapacity to procure your own Liberty. You must continue for ever in a miserable Condition, if God do not set you at Liberty: And in this Extremity God offers Deliverance to you. It would not be so strange, if your Deliverance would be any Advantage to God, but he gains nothing by it. It is indeed for his Honour to Deliver you; and so it would be for his Honour if he should refuse to Deliver you. But

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But it is no profit to him, he is Blessed forever, whatever becomes of you. Yet he is freely offering Deliverance to you.

1. *This is offered to you, though you brought your self into this Condition by your Rebellion.* Many Men that are in Captivity, are to be pityed under that Consideration, That it was not their fault that they are Captives: It was not from any Perverseness or Indiscretion of theirs, that they are in such a Condition, but your Captivity is the fruit of your Rebellion. Man was made in an estate of Freedom, but we cast our selves into this Bondage by breaking God's Law. We might have lived happily if we would have obeyed, but ventured for the sake of the *Forbidden Fruit*, to go abreast against God's Law, and plunged our selves into this Misery. Rom. 3. 23. *Man has Sinned, and fallen short of the Glory of God.* God might have said, *Seeing they would be Miserable, let them be Miserable: They should have known when they were well; their Misery is no more than they deserve, Seeing they would serve the Devil, let them be his Bond-slaves, let them find by Experience, the fruit of their own Folly.* But such is his Mercy, that he has overlooked the Provocation, and

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ys, as Hof. 13. 9. *Thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy Help.*

2. *Though it has cost him much to make this Offer.* The generality of the great Works of God have not been costly to him. When he was to make the World, he spake and they were Created; he Commanded and they stood fast; but our Deliverance was costly. 1 Cor. 6. 20. *We are bought with a price.* Men are willing to Redeem others out of Captivity, if they can have it for a moderate Sum; but this Deliverance cost the Blood of the Son of God. In order to it, the Son of God must take our Nature: That was great Condescension; he stooped very low, to take a Nature made out of the Dust; and in this Nature he suffered the Curse of the Law. It would have been a great Misery for us to have suffered the Curse of the Law; and it was a great kindness for the Son of God to suffer that Curse for us. Though the Divine Nature did not suffer, yet it was God that suffered. Act. 20. 28. *God hath purchased the Church with his own Blood.* If that Nature had not been taken into Union with the Son of God, it would not have been such love for God to inflict Sufferings on it; but being
United

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United to the Son of God, it was unspeakable Love for God to deliver it to Death. Rom. 5. 8. *God commendeth his Love towards us, in that while we were yet Sinners Christ died for us.* God was at great Expence for our Deliverance.

3. *He offered this to you before you asked him.* Some Men would think it time enough to offer Men Liberty when they are sought to, and would make that an Objection, that Men never asked them for such a Favour; but he has prevented you he did not wait to see whether you would fall before him upon your Knees, and with Tears in your Eyes beg Deliverance of him; but he laid the Foundation of this Deliverance before you were Born; sent his Son to Die for you, many Ages before you came into the World, and in early Days offered Deliverance to you, before you had any Thoughts about it. He called on you, before ever you called on him. It would have been an exceeding Mercy to have hearkned to you, and made you such an Offer, after you had with Prayers and Supplications, with strong Crying and Tears sought unto him for it. But God has been beforehand with you, and before you

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3. He offered this to you before you asked him.

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ever thought of any such thing, hath sent the Gospel to you. you have no Occasion to say, *Who shall ascend into Heaven* (to bring Christ down from above) or *who shall descend into the Deep?* But the Word is nigh thee, in thy Mouth, and in thy Heart. Rom. 10. 6, 7, 8. God has brought the Gospel to your Doors.

4. He offers this to you, after many Refusals. You have been greatly Guilty, in following on the offers of the Gospel. You have been like the Deaf Adder. God has called and set many Arguments before you, and after time of Consideration, has renewed his offers; but you have rejected them. Prov. 1. 24. *I have called, and they have refused: I stretched out my Hand, and they have not regarded.* You have delayed him, you have denyed him, you have affronted him; yet he persists to make the offer still. *He stands at the Door and Knocks.* Rev. 3. 20. He might have said, *They should have known when they were well off; let them learn by their Sufferings, what it is to despise such Grace. This is not a Mercy to be trampled on, seeing they won't have Life, let them have Death.* He might have been discouraged from making any more offers to

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to you. He might have said, *It is in vain to call upon them; they are in love with their Servitude and won't. What could I say more than I have said? They are stubborn willful Creatures, I'll wait no longer on them, the Kingdom shall be taken from them. But notwithstanding all Provocations, he is still offering Deliverance. After so long a time he is saying, To Day while it is called to day barden not your Hearts.*

2 USE. Of Reproof to those that don't accept the offer of Deliverance. Accepting the offer is a secret Thing, and I don't pretend to know who hath not accepted; but if we be not better than the *Jews*, few have accepted. Christ Complains of this *Joh. 5. 40. Ye will not come to me, that you may have Life. Luk. 14. 18. They all with one Consent began to make Excuse. And there be many Evidences against some Men, that they don't accept. Truly it is a very great Affront to God, that you don't accept. He might well expect that you should accept it with Thankfulness. Christ makes great Complaint of them, Mat 23. 37. I would have gathered thy Children together, as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her Wings, and ye would not.*

el, to the wounded in Spirit. 127

1. In some, it is because they are not afraid of the Misery that Satan is leading them unto. Some Men are not much afraid of Damnation. They have cause to be afraid; multitudes of such as they, are gone to Hell. The Sinners of the Old World are there; they were Disobedient in the Days of Noah, and now their Spirits are in Prison. 1 Pet. 19. 20. God threatens them with Damnation. The Chaff shall be burnt up with unquenchable Fire. Math. 3. 12. Many others have been afraid. Isai. 33. 14. Sinners in Generation are afraid, Trembling takes hold of Hypocrites. The Divels are afraid. Jam. 2. 19. The Divels believe and Tremble. It is a dreadful Thing to loose Heaven, and all the Good of that, and endure the Pains of Hell. It is strange that Men that can't bear the Aking of a tooth, make light of going to Hell: But many through Atheism and Flattery, are not afraid, and so they don't regard the offers of Deliverance, but are casting horrible Contempt upon the Grace of God.

2. In some, it is from love to that Drudgery that Satan puts them to. They love their sins; they love to serve the World; they love to indulge their Lusts: Their Lusts are

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are like a Right Eye: They say as they Jer. 2. 25. *I have loved Strangers, and after them I will go.* They have little Reason to be fond of their Service; 'tis base and low beneath Rational Creatures. They do bereave their Souls of Comfort: It Wounds their Consciences; it exposes them to Wrath. They might live Pleasantly, and Honourably, and so as is agreeable to Conscience. The benefit of serving God is very great. Psal. 19. 11. *In keeping thy Commandments is great Reward.* But they don't know how to part with their Sins; they are bewitched with the World, and their Life is bound up in Carnal Enjoyments, and they are not willing to be delivered; they are naturallized to their Sins, and it is like Death to part with them.

3. *In some, it is from their not believing that God will deliver them.* Some cry for Deliverance, but don't accept the Offers. They are Fearful and Unbelieving. Rev. 21. 8. They scare themselves, because of the Anger of God; they scare themselves, because of the Threatnings of the Word, and because of the badness of their Hearts. They hear that Christ has satisfied Justice for Sin; that God is willing to be reconciled

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ciled to Sinners, but they dare not adventure themselves on Christ; they think if their Hearts were better, and they could bleed freely for their Sins, and had a more fervent Spirit of Love to God, his Heart would be mollified towards them, and he would be more inclinable to give Salvation to them: But as they are, they dare not accept, they think it would be Presumption; without all Reason, they call in Question the Word of God. One would think God's Word should satisfy them. Psal. 12. 6. *The Words of the Lord are pure Words.* But they dare not depend upon Gods Word. They doubt that we don't understand the Meaning of it, and that it is to be understood with some Limitations that we are not aware of.

3 USE. *Of Exhortation to those that have accepted this Offer, Rejoice in this Deliverance that God has bestowed on you. You have received and do receive the Offer, and God hath done according to what he offered, and you are delivered: Rejoice in this.*

1. *You are delivered from servitude to Satan.* He is Tempting of you still, and leads you into a great deal of Transgression, as he Tempted David to Number the People.

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of Israel. Yet you are not his Servants, his Dominion is taken away, and he is under Restraint, and cannot Govern you as he did. It is a dreadful Thing to be a Slave to Satan. Thus it is with all Ungodly Men; they are the Seed of the Serpent; they are the Children of the wicked One. Math. 13. 38. *The Tares are the Children of the wicked One; they are of their Father the Devil, and his Lusts they will do.* Joh. 8. 44. But you have changed Masters, and now serve the living God. You are now delivered from the power of Darkness, and turned from Satan unto God. Act. 26. 18. And do maintain a Warfare against the power of Darkness. Eph. 6. 12. *We wrestle not against Flesh and Blood, but against Principalities, against Powers, against the Rulers of the Darkness of this World, against Spiritual Wickedness in High Places.*

2. *You are well provided for.* Many Men Having nothing to Refresh their Hearts but Carnal Things, they are in a starved Condition; they are Pining for want of Satisfaction; but the Case is altered with you. You draw Water out of the Wells of Salvation, *Isai. 12. 3.* You can sit under the shadow of Christ with Delight, and his Fruit is Sweet.

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Sweet to your Taste. As Cant. 2. 3. God has made satisfying Provision, and you are at times feeding on that. The Flesh of Christ is Meat indeed, and his Blood is Drink indeed; and you have a great deal of Comfort in that. And while other Men have nothing to cover them but the rotten Rags of their own Righteousness, your Souls are beautified and adorned with the Robes of Christ's Righteousness; and Christ Jesus says of you, as Cant. 4. 7. Thou art all Fair my Love, there is no Spot in thee. And God says of you, Ezek. 16. 14. Thy Beauty is perfect through my Comeliness which I have put upon thee, saith the Lord God.

*3. God is leading you unto Glory. You are on this side Heaven, and have many Temptations, but your Salvation is secured. God is conducting you to Glory, and will without fail bring you thither. The Glory of Heaven is very great; it will bring Satisfaction; it exceeds all the Glory of the World, more than the Light of the Sun both the Light of Rotten Wood: And God will not suffer you to fail of this. Your expectations as to some Worldly Enjoyments may fail, but God will lead you in the very way to Glory. Psal. 73. 24. *Thou wilt**

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wilt guide me by thy Counsel, and afterwards receive me to Glory. Christ Jesus has prepared a Place for you, and he reserves it for you. 1 Pet. 1. 4. *You are Begotten unto an Inheritance Incorruptible, Undeſiled, and that ſadeth not away, reſerved in Heaven for you.* Abundance of People are Dying continually, and they all need to go to Heaven, but they ſhall not prevent you: There is a Place prepared, and it is reſerved for you.

The Fifth Sermon.

Luke 4. 18.

And recovery of Sight to the Blind.

IN this Claufe mind 1. The Charge of thoſe that he is to Preach to, viz. *Thoſe that are Blind.* There is 1. Bodily Blindneſs, which ariſeth from ſeveral Cauſes, when Men are not able to diſcern Bodily Objects, either through the want of Organs, or the Indiſpoſition of them.

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Sometimes they cannot see from the want of Light, or from the Interposition of some Opake Body; But Blindness riseth from some Default in the Body. 2. A Spiritual Blindness, when Men cannot see God, or any Spiritual Thing. Thus it is with Ungodly Men. 3. Epist. Joh. 11. *He that doth Evil, hath not seen God.* Rev. 3. 17. *Thou art Poor, and Blind, and Naked.* This Blindness may be the greater, by reason of contracted evil Habits, and the Temptation of Satan. 2 Cor. 4. 4. *The God of this World hath blinded the Minds of them that believe not.* 2. What he was to Preach, *viz.* Recovery of Sight. Adam had Spiritual Understanding, but we have lost it, and must have our Sight recovered. 2. How was he to Preach the Recovery of Sight? He was not properly to offer it to them, though he offers further degrees of Sight to his People. Rev. 3. 18. *I Counsel thee to buy of me Gold tried in the Fire, white Raiment, and to anoint thy Eyes with Eye-salve, that thou mayst see.* Yet he must see before he can come to Christ. Men must come to Christ Understandingly. Joh. 6. 45. *Every one that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto Christ.* But that which he Preaches is,

That

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That there is an Opportunity to have the Sight recovered: They were under an advantage to have their Eyes opened.

DOCTRINE. *They that live under the Preaching of the Gospel, have an opportunity to have their Eyes opened.* It is one of the great Miseries of Mankind, that they are Blind; and it is a great Priviledge to recover their Sight. There is opportunity for this, by the Preaching of the Gospel. Those that live in Heathenish Darknesse, have no opportunity to have their Eyes opened. They that belong to the visible Kingdom of Darknesse, do also belong to the invisible Kingdom of Darknesse. But they that have the Light of the Gospel shining among them, have an opportunity to have their Eyes opened. All that live under the Preaching of the Gospel, have not the like opportunity. In Christ's time, they had a greater opportunity than before. The more clearly and powerfully it is taught, the greater is the opportunity. But where it is taught, there is an opportunity. People are under an Advantage to have their Eyes opened. Act. 26. 18. I send thee to open their Eyes, to turn them from Darknesse to Light. Col. 1. 3. He hath delivered us from the power of Darknesse.

to the wounded in Spirit. 135

The Demonstration. 1. *They have those Truths revealed to them, that they should see, Where the Gospel is Preached, Spiritual Truths are brought to Light. Act. 11. 14. He shall tell thee Words, whereby thou and all thy House shall be saved. God and Christ, and the way of Salvation are made known by the Gospel. 2 Tim. 1. 10. He hath brought Life and Immortality by the Gospel to Light. The Gospel teaches those Spiritual Doctrines that are necessary to Salvation. There is a clear Explication of the Properties of God's Nature, of the lost Estate of Man, of the Work of Redemption by Christ; his Person, his Offices, his Humiliation, and his Exaltation, and of the Covenant of Grace, and the Condition of Salvation. 1 Cor. 2. 10. God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit. Yea, these Things are not barely told, but there is a great deal of Evidence and Demonstration of them: So that hereby Men come to have a Literal Knowledge of them, even of all things that are needful to Salvation. 2 Tim. 3. 15. The Holy Scriptures are able to make thee wise unto Salvation. Yea, Men have such Conviction of them, as makes them concerned to get a spiritual Understanding of them.*

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This is one great Help: The Object that they should see, is fairly presented before them in the Gospel.

2. *They have a Conviction set before them that they are Blind.* In the Gospel, there is a Declaration of Man's Blindness. There is a Divine Testimony that Men are Blind. Men naturally are Ignorant of it, but God gives Witness to it. Eph. 4. 18. *Having their Understandings darkened, being alienated from the Life of God, through the Ignorance that is in them, because of the Blindness of their Heart.* Besides, there they may learn how they come to be Blind, that by the fall of Adam, their whole Nature is Corrupted. Rom. 3. 23. *Man has Sinned, and has fallen short of the Glory of God.* And as the Will is depraved, so the Mind likewise. It is made Evident also from hence, that God has made great Provision that we may recover our Sight. He has made it the Office of Jesus Christ, to give Light and Understanding to us. Isai. 49. 6. *I will give thee also to be a Light unto the Gentiles.* Joh. 9. 39. *For Judgment came I into the World, that they that see not, might see.* He shews our Blindness by the sorrowful Effects of it, living a Sinful and Corrupt Life,

to be wounded in Spirit. 137

Life. He teaches us, That they that know him, will trust in him, love and obey him; and that they that do live otherwise, do not know him. He that saith, *I know him, and keepeth not his Commandments, is a Lyar, and the Truth is not in him.* And hereby he shews us our Blindness, in revealing things that our Reason and Consciences tell us must be so. And yet we cannot see nor believe them. There is such Evidence, that we must say, it can't be otherwise: And yet we are not able to give Entertainment to them. We are silenced, yet not convinced.

3. *They are directed what to do, that they may see.* We are taught, that we must Pray to God to open our Eyes. A seeing Eye, and an hearing Ear, the Lord is the maker of them both. Men are ready to think that they shall get the Knowledge of God and Christ, by improving their Natural Reason, by Study and Consideration; that they can argue themselves into the Knowledge of Spiritual Things: But it is quite beyond them, and they must be brought to beg it of God. Prov. 2. 3. *They must cry for Wisdom, and lift up their Voice for Understanding.* The Gospel shews that it is Gods

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Gods Work to give Understanding.

1. 17. *That God would give you the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation in the Knowledge of him.* Again we are directed to wait for the Preaching of the Word, *To wait at the Gates of Wisdom.* Prov. 8. 34. So we are taught, Rom. 10. 17. *Faith comes by Hearing, and Hearing by the Word of God.* We are directed also to submit to the Sovereignty of God. It is plainly told us, *that God hath Mercy on whom he will have Mercy.* Rom. 9. 15. He is not bound to any particular Person; he is at liberty either to leave them to Blindness, or to open their Eyes. They can bring God under no necessity to give Light to them: And accordingly it is their Duty to submit to his sovereign Pleasure.

4. *They are under an Indefinite Promise of having their Eyes opened.* After all, this is needful, that God should convince Men of the certainty of Spiritual Things; and God has made Promises of that. He is not under Engagement to particular Persons, but he hath promised that Christ shall be a *Light to the Gentiles.* Isa. 49. 6. That is saving Light. So he has promised it to Ministers, to encourage them in their Work.

Math.

to the wounded in Spirit. 139

20. Teach them to observe all things that
have Commanded, and lo, I am with you al-
way to the end of the World. Joh. 16. 8. The
Comforter shall convince the World of Sin, of
Righteousness, and of Judgment. Act. 26. 17,
18. I send thee to open the Blind Eyes, to turn
them from Darkness to Light. Yea, he has
promised this Mercy to his Church. Joh.
14. 26. All thy Children shall be taught of the
Lord. Heb. 8. 10, 11. This shews, that he
is engaged to bestow this Mercy upon a
Number, where he doth set up his Ordina-
nces; and accordingly it is the manner
of God, to give Spiritual Light and Un-
derstanding to some; and this shews, that
they that live under the means of Grace,
have an opportunity of recovering their
Sight. They are under an hopeful Advan-
tage to enjoy this Mercy.

I USE. Of Reproof to those that don't im-
prove this Opportunity. It is great Folly, not
to improve Opportunities. It is the Wisdom
of Men to watch for Opportunities. 1 Kin.
20. 33. The Men did diligently observe whe-
ther any thing would come from him, and did
hastily catch it. And it is great Foolishness
to neglect them. Prov. 17. 16. Wherefore is
there a Prize in the Hand of a Fool to get Wis-
dom,

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dom, when he hath no Heart to it? It was Jezebel's fault that she neglected it. Rev. 3. 21. I gave her a space to Repent, and she Repented not. A Season for Worldly Advantages should not be lost through Carelessness and Sloth. Opportunities for Peace and Health, and Liberty should not be lost. So Opportunities to get Spiritual Wisdom and Understanding. Those that don't improve them, are Adversaries to themselves. They don't consult their own Good: They will bewail the loss of them, and cry out of their Madness in not improving them. That will be one Aggravation of the Misery of Men hereafter, that they had glorious Opportunities, but did not improve them. Other parts of their Punishment will be the greater, and the Reproaches of Conscience will be the more.

1. They that don't cry to God to open their Eyes. Some Men for Form-sake, put up such Requests to God; but they don't cry Earnestly, nor follow God with secret Prayer. God may say of some Men, Isai. 43. 22. Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob, thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. And Complain of many as he doth, Isai. 64. 7. There is none that calleth upon thy Name, that

stirreth

to the wounded in Spirit. 141

stirreth up himself to take hold of thee. These persons may thank themselves, if they remain in Darkness. God may well say, *If Light be not worth Praying for in their Esteem, let them go without it.* These Men are unsensible of their Misery: If they were Sensible, they would cry Earnestly to God, as he, Luk. 18. 38. *He cryed, saying, Jesus, thou Son of David, have Mercy on me.* These Men have not only Blind Minds, but hard Hearts. They are under the power of a stupid and insensible Spirit. They have not only a great deal of Blindness, but they have contracted a great deal of Blindness. They want common Illumination. God gives many Blessings to Men without asking; but they shall ask for this Mercy before they do receive it. It is a Contempt upon God, and an Undervaluing of the Blessing, not to ask it of him. If they hold their Tongues, God will hold his Hand. These Men are Blind at present, and that is their Misery; and they will continue Blind, and that is a greater Misery.

2. *Such as will not be convinced of their own Blindness.* It may be, they do pray to God to open their Eyes; but they are not convinced how Blind they be. They are told, that

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that they must become Fools, that they may be Wise. 1 Cor. 3. 18. But they say as Job 9. 40. *Are we Blind also?* They are not convinced that they are totally Blind; they think they see somewhat of the Evil of Sin, and of the Faithfulness of God, and of the Divinity of Christ. They are not convinced that they cannot recover themselves. They hope by Degrees to Work it out, and by Reading and Study to force it. But in very deed, you must see your Misery before you find the Remedy. Men that are Blind, are incapable of a Spiritual Conviction of it, while they do remain Blind; but they must have an Experimental Conviction of it. If you depend upon your own sufficiency to get Sight, God will say, *Let them do it if they can.* His way is to convince such Men of their Blindness before he helps them. Rev. 3. 17. He says, *Thou art Blind:* And then V. 18. Encourages, that he will anoint their Eyes with Eye-Salve that they may see.

2 USE. See hence, that the Preaching of the Gospel is a very great Blessing. Some Persons have no great esteem for it. It is Chargeable, and it doth disquiet their Consciences, and they never got any Spiritual Good

And Judge
to the wounded in Spirit. 143

Good by it: But indeed it is a very great blessing. It is a Mercy to hear good Tidings, and the Gospel is so, Rom. 10. 15. *How beautiful are the Feet of them that Preach the Gospel of Peace, and bring glad Tidings of good Things! David was very Thankful for the Word of God, Psal. 147. 19, 20. He hath shewed his Word unto Jacob, his statutes and his Judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any Nation, and as for his Judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord. And the Apostle cries up this Priviledge. Rom. 3. 1, 2. What advantage then hath the Jew, and what profit is there of Circumcision? Much every way: Chiefly, because unto them were committed the Oracles of God. The state of many Nations is Doleful, because they have not the Gospel. And it is not without Cause, that many Bless God for the Gospel. It is to be prized upon this Consideration, That Men have an Opportunity thereby, for the recovering of their Sight. In this way it is very Serviceable.*

1. *This is Pleasant.* 'Tis a delightful thing to have the Eyes open. Eccl. 11. 7. *Truly the Light is Sweet, and a pleasant Thing it is for the Eyes to behold the Sun. It is pleasant*

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to see Palaces, and Navies, and Cities and Armies; it is pleasant to an Hungry Man to see Bread, to the Thirsty to see a Fountain of Living Water, to a pursuing Man to see a Castle. When Mens Eyes are opened, they see things that are *Wonderful*. Psal. 119. 18. *Open thou mine Eyes, that I may see wondrous Things in thy Law*. David longed to see more. Psal. 63. 2. *I see thy Power and Glory, so as I have seen thee in the Sanctuary*. The Sight of Christ, is a Glorious Sight: So the Sight of the Mercy and Faithfullness of God; no Worldly Objects are to be compared unto them. It is worth the while to go through a great deal of Trouble, for a Sight of Jesus Christ. The Angel sends Word to the Disciples that *Christ would go before them into Galilee, and there they should see him*. Math. 28. 7. It is worth the while to take a great Journey for a Sight of Christ. Phil. 3. 10. *Paul's Heart was in it, that he might know him, and the Power of his Resurrection, and the fellowship of his Sufferings*. When the Wise Men saw the Star that directed to Christ, they rejoiced with exceeding great Joy. Math. 2. 10. The Sight of Jesus Christ is a beautiful Vision. The very Reason why

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Exhibition of the Gospel

to the wounded in Spirit. 145

Mortal Man can't see God and live, as it is said, Exod. 33. 20. is because such a Sight of God as Saints have in Heaven, would occasion so much Joy, as would be outbidding the Nature of Man. The greatest Delight of Man, must needs lie in the Exercise of his superiour Faculties, Understanding and Will, upon the most glorious Objects. It is a most pleasant Thing, to enjoy spiritual Light.

2. *It Sanctifies the Heart.* You complain of an hard Heart, a rebellious Heart, a worldly, and an envious and stubborn Heart, but the opening of your Eyes will help you. The Sight of God and Jesus Christ has a great deal of power to Sanctify you. When you see God, you will trust in him. Psal. 9. 10. *They that know thy Name, will put their trust in thee.* The reason that Men are so backward to trust in Christ, is not because they know themselves to be so bad, but because they are Ignorant of God and of Christ. When they see God and Christ, they see the Foundation of Faith; what abundant Encouragement there is to put their trust in him. When they see God, they will love him. The Excellency of God as a magnetick Power to draw the Heart.

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Before they see him, they can't love him; whatever Arguments are used with them; and when they see him, they will love him; whatever Temptations they have. Psal. 91.

14. Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my Name.

If your Sight be recovered, you will see the reason of all spiritual Duties. When Men see the hatefulnes of Sin, they will hate it. The knowledge of God will make Men Upright. Psal. 36. 10. *Stretch forth thy loving Kindness to them that know thee, and thy Faithfullness to the Upright in Heart.* Then Men are Upright, when they serve God for his own sake, and that they will do when they see his Worthiness.

3. *It secures Eternal Life.* If a Man be secure of Eternal Life, that will make Afflictions easy; that will make Enjoyments more sweet; that will make Duties pleasant; that will make Death Comfortable and Profitable, and if Mens Sight be recovered, Eternal Life will. They will not always have the Knowledge of it, but they will be in a safe Condition. Blind Men won't find the way to Heaven; but when their Eyes are opened, they will see the way.

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way. They that have the Light of Grace, shall have the Light of Glory. The Light of Grace and Glory are of the same kind, though not in the same degree. Those that God makes spiritually Wise, are Wise unto Salvation. They that have this Vision will not Perish. If God shews Men the Path of Life, they will be brought into his Presence, *where there is fullness of Joy, and to his right Hand, where are Pleasures for evermore.* Psal. 16. 11. *Happy is the Man that findeth Wisdom, and the Man that getteth Understanding.* Joh. 17. 3. *This is Eternal Life to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.*

3 USE. Of Examination, *whether you have received this benefit of the Gospel.* You are Thankful to God for the Gospel, and many times in your Prayers bless God for it. And you pity those that have not the Gospel, but what are you the better for it? Have you recovered your Sight? You have got abundance of Knowledge by it, and are able to Discourse very Understandingly about it. You increase continually in Rational Knowledge; this may be, and yet you may remain spiritually Blind. There are but a few that are recovered. There

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are but a few that are bodily Blind, and there be but a few but are spiritually Blind. It may be you have Illuminations, and yet are Blind.

Signes are, 1. *Common Illumination is affecting, but when the Eyes are opened, Men are convinced.* Common Illuminations do sometimes greatly affect. Men are glad and taken with them, and they are Thankful. Math. 13. 20. *He that received the Seed into stony Places, is he that beareth the Word, and anon with Joy receiveth it.* Gal. 4. 15. *Where is then the Blessedness you spake of? for I bear you Record, that if it had been possible, you would have plucked out your own Eyes, and have given them to me.* But these Illuminations don't convince them of the Truth of the Gospel, and of the sureness of the Grace of God: But when Mens Eyes are opened, they are convinced: They are indeed affected, but that is not all; but God teaches and shews them the Path of Life. Psal. 16. 11. *They are taught of God, and learn the truth of the Gospel.* Joh. 6. 45. *They have the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation.* Eph. 1. 17. *The Father that is in Heaven reveals Christ to them.* Math. 16. 17. *The Word comes with a Divine Authority,*

to the wounded in Spirit. 149

ity, and they receive it as it is indeed the Word of God. 1 Thes. 2. 13. They don't see a probability, but a certainty in the Doctrines of the Gospel.

2. *Common Illumination discovers one particular Thing, but when the Eyes are opened, they see all the Foundations of Faith.* In common Illuminations, they see sometimes that God is Gracious. Sometimes they have a sense that Heaven is Glorious. Luk. 14. 15. *One that sat at Meat, when he heard those Things, said, Blessed is he that shall eat Bread in the Kingdom of God.* Sometimes that there is a great Saviour. Math. 13. 20. *A man with Joy he receiveth it.* That the Tidings of Salvation are Pleasant. Gal. 4. 15. But when their Eyes are opened, it is Light all about them. Then they see that there is an Eternal God; that he is of free Grace, and that his Word is Faithful; that Christ Jesus is the Son of God, the only Mediatour; that he hath satisfied Justice; that he is able to save to the uttermost; that he invites the Soul; that in him all Fullness dwells. The Soul is satisfied with the whole Doctrine of the Gospel. He can't think of all things at once, but he sees that this is the very way of Salvation. *He knows*

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God and Jesus Christ, Joh. 17. 3. He receives the whole Gospel. The Light that he has, is the *Light of the Gospel*, 2 Cor. 4. 4.

3. *Common Illumination many times works a Confidence, that works a Dependance.* When Men have common Illuminations, they don't work in that way to make them rely on the faithful Offers of God, and roll themselves on Christ: But on that Occasion they say, God is theirs, and Christ is theirs, and they promise themselves Heaven; but they don't accept the Calls and Invitations of the Gospel, and relinquish all their own Righteousness, and trust in Christ, as offered to them, but catch at some Promise as if it were theirs. They are Thankful to God, but when the Eyes of Men are opened, they see an offer of Mercy and accept of it. They see God calling and inviting them: They see an open Door set before them, and that God is sending a Message of Mercy to them. He shews them the way of Life, and the proposals of Mercy, and they consent to the Invitation, and close with God's Proposal, and yield Obedience to the Command of the Gospel. They see an Offer made to them, and they are required to receive

el, *to the wounded in Spirit.* 151

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receive it, and the Will is bound to close with it, as that which is Safe and Glorious. There is an Assent of the Understanding, and a Consent of the Will. The Man relies on Christ, as a Man would venture his Life in a strong Castle. So he makes Christ his Refuge. *He flees for Refuge, to lay hold on the Hope that is set before him.* Heb. 6. 18. After this, he reflects on what he has seen and done, and thence there ariseth a Confidence. The Call of God works first Dependance, and afterwards a Confidence. Rom. 5. 1. *Being justified by Faith, we have Peace with God.*

4. Common Illumination sometimes makes Men to depend in part on Christ; but when the Eyes are opened, they depend upon him alone. Men receive some common Illuminations, and they think that Christ is sufficient for such Penitent Humble Sinners as they, and so they depend partly upon themselves, and partly upon Christ. They trust partly in the Law, and partly in the Gospel. They depend partly on Works, and partly on Christ. The Apostle declares against that; he says, Rom. 11. 6. *If by Grace, then it is no more of Works: Otherwise Grace is no more Grace. If of Works, it is no more Grace.*

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Grace: Otherwise Work is no more Work. Such as have only common Illuminations, take their first Encouragement from themselves, and hope that the Righteousness of Christ will make up their Defects. But those whose Eyes are opened, do trust in Christ alone. Phil. 3. 3. *We Rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no Confidence in the Flesh.* They see a sufficiency in Christ Jesus, and make that, together with God's Grace and Faithfulness, the whole Foundation of their Faith. Rom. 4. 5. *They believe on him that justifieth the Ungodly.* They have no Dependence on any thing of their own.

4. *USE. Of Advice to those whose Eyes are opened, to use this Mercy well.* God hath blessed the Gospel for the recovery of your Sight, and thereby has laid a Foundation of Blessedness in you. God has made you more Happy, than many Men that make a greater Figure in the World than you do. In the Day that God opened your Eyes, he opened a Door to you to such Blessedness, as cannot enter into the Heart of Man to Conceive of. He has bestowed many other Enjoyments upon you, but they are not to be compared with this. Let it be your care to use this Mercy well.

Parti-

sermon of the Gospel

to the wounded in Spirit. 153

Particularly, 1. *Don't Darken your Eyes again.* Indeed you can't put out your own Eyes. 1 Joh. 2. 27. *The Anointing that you have received of him, abideth in you.* Yet you may much Darken your own Eyes. There be two ways wherein you may do it: One is by carnal Reasoning. Sometimes Men become Vain in their Imaginations, and so their foolish Hearts are darkened. Sometimes they argue from the greatness of their Sins; as if their Sins were too big or too many for God to Pardon. They limit the Holy One of Israel, as if their Sins did exceed God's Mercies; as if God could not find in his Heart to overcome their Provocations; or as if Christ's Blood were not of Value enough to expiate their Guilt. Sometimes they argue from the Justice of God, as if he must avenge himself upon them; as if their Sufferings would give better Satisfaction to the Law, than the Sufferings of Christ: As if it would be a deluding of the Law to acquit them on the account of the Death of Christ. Sometimes they argue from the greatness of Heavenly Glory, as if it were too much for God to be willing to bestow. Sometimes they argue from the fewness of those that

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that are saved, as if there were no likelihood that they should be of that Number and so they set their uncertain Reasonings against the infallible Word of God. They set Appearances and Conjectures against the sure Word of Prophecy. The other way wherein Men Darken their Eyes, is by Unbelief. God Encourages them to come to Christ, but they don't know that it is God that speaks: The Word doth not come with a divine Authority upon their Heart. They are not sensible that the Words are the Words of a Faithful God. They don't know the certainty of what is spoken. Christ upbraids his Disciples for this, Luk. 24. 25. *O Fools, and slow of Heart to believe those Things that the Prophets have Written.* They don't know what to make of the Encouragement of the Word. They loose the sense of the Glorious Faithfulness of God, who speaks in his Word. Unbelief brings a Mist before the Eyes. You must maintain the exercise of Faith, as David when he says, *The Words of the Lord are pure Words; like Silver tried in a Furnace of Earth, purified seven Times.* Psal. 12. 6.

2. *Get your Sight increased.* As the Morning Light increases more and more unto the

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to the wounded in Spirit. 155

the perfect Day, so you must be careful to grow in spiritual Knowledge. 2 Pet. 3. 18. *Grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* And there be two ways of increasing it, both hinted in Eph. 1. 17. *That God would give unto you the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation in the Knowledge of him.* One way is spiritual Reasoning and Arguing. There be many Arguments whereby we may be established in those Truths that are the Foundation of Faith. Many things that clear it up, that the Scriptures are indeed the Word of God; that Christ Jesus is the Son of God; that his Sufferings satisfy for our Sins; that we shall certainly be saved in a way of Beliving; by Musing and Considering these things, we may be further established in the Truth, and be confirmed in the belief of the way of Salvation by Christ. As carnal Reasonings strengthen Unbelief, so Spiritual Reasonings do strengthen Faith. The other way is by special Discoveries. This is called Revelation: Not such as the Prophets had, but sometimes the Spirit of God breaths in with much Light into the Heart; the Curtain is drawn, the Vail is laid aside, and there

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there be raised Acts of Faith, whereby he sees both the Reality and Glory of Gospel Truths. Sometimes God discovers, that God delights to save Sinners by Christ; that he is free to accept the Soul; that Christ is now in Glory at the right Hand of God; that the Promises of the Gospel are True and Faithful. This *David* has respect to, *Psal. 119. 18. Open thou mine Eyes, and I shall behold wondrous Things in thy Law. The Sun of Righteousness doth appear to them, with Healing in his Wings. Mal. 4. 2.*

3. *Walk as Children of the Light.* This is required, *Eph. 5. 8. You were sometimes Darkness, but now are you Light in the Lord: Walk as Children of the Light.* God may well expect it that you should walk according to the Light that he hath given you. If Things be indeed as you have seen them, what manner of Persons ought you to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness? If God be Glorious as you have seen, Powerful, Merciful, Faithful, then you should trust in him in all your Difficulties, and not give way to a discouraged Spirit, but be Rejoycing in the Covenant of God. If Jesus Christ be an All-sufficient

to the wounded in Spirit. 157

Saviour as you have seen, you should not be afraid to put your trust in him, but should Rejoice in him, when you have the sense of your own Unworthiness and Sinfulness. If God be such a Glorious Portion as you have seen, you should be weaned from the World, nor have a craving, violent Spirit after outward Enjoyments, like Men that have nothing else; but you should have an Heavenly Conversation, and be taken up in the Consideration of the Glory of another World, and be thirsting after the Presence of God. If God be so great and Glorious as you have seen, you should be very obedient to his Voice. If there be such wonderful Grace in the Gospel, you should be quickened to all Duties of Obedience, deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts; and live Godly, Righteously and Soberly in this present World. It is a great Provocation to God, for Persons whose Eyes have been opened, to carry as others. 1 Thes. 4. 5. *Not in the Lust of Concupiscence, as other Gentiles that know not God.* God was Angry with Solomon, because he forsook the Lord that had appeared unto him twice. 1 Kin. 11. 9. spiritual Knowledge leads to spiritual Practices. The Doctrines of the Gospel do greatly advance Holiness. 4. Seek

Thus be it
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4. *Seek to God, that the Eyes of others may be opened.* When a Man's Eyes are opened, he should long that the Eyes of many others should be opened upon a double Account. One is, that the Gloriousness of God and Christ Jesus may be seen. It is a sorrowful Thing, that Men should have such low Thoughts of God and Jesus Christ, who deserve so much Esteem. Men have dishonourable Thoughts of them, and cast a great deal of Contempt upon them, without any Reason. It is greatly to be desired, that they judge aright of them. The other is the Experience that he has had, what a miserable Condition Men are in that are Blind. Some are Sottish and Sencelesse. Some are Tormented in Conscience, and both sorts in danger of eternal Ruine. These Considerations should make such a Man to be in Pain for others, for Children and Neighbours: And there is great Reason to be imploring of God, that he would open their Eyes. There is a great deal of Encouragement in the many Promises that God has made. There be Promises to Christ, and Promises to the Church, and Promises to Ministers. These Things should be pleaded with God. God has done great Things.

*Book of the Comforts
of the Holy Spirit*

Things in Answer to the Prayers of his People. It is a Thing pleasing to God, that his People have this upon their Hearts. Let this be often remembred when you come before God, that the Preaching of the Gospel may not be in Vain, but that many among us, Children and others, may recover their Sight; as the Prophet *Elisha* Prays for his Servant. 2 Kin. 6. 17. And *Elisha* prayed, and said, *Lord I pray thee open his Eyes that he may see.*

The Sixth Sermon

Luke 4. 18.

To set at Liberty them that are Bruised.

HERE is another *Metaphor*, where by the Service of Christ is set forth. Where note, 1. Whom he is to help. viz. *Them that are Bruised.* In *Isaiah*, it is them that are Bound. Men that are Bound with Fetters, are many times hurt and galled with them. *Psal. 105. 18.* Speaking of

They that are bound with Fetters, are many times hurt and galled with them.

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of Joseph, the Psalmist says, *Whose Feet they hurt with Fetters, he was laid in Iron.*

2. *How he is to help them. viz. By setting them at Liberty.* In *Isaiah* it is, the opening of the Prison. He is to free them from their Bonds; to give Liberty and Enlargement unto them. In *Isaiah* he is said, *to Preach the opening of the Prison*; but here he is said *to set at Liberty*. So that he doth not only offer Liberty, but by the Gospel effect the Liberty of them that are Bruised.

DOCTRINE. *The Gospel doth set many at Liberty that were in the Condition of Prisoners.* Many Men are not the better for the Gospel, but the worse; but it is very Profitable unto some. They are naturally in a very sorrowful Condition; they are like Prisoners: But by the Gospel they are set at Liberty. Such ungodly Men as are Dead, are in Prison. 1 Pet. 3. 19. And such ungodly Men as are Living, are in Prison also. But God by the Gospel, has set many of this latter sort at Liberty. Some that are sensible that they are in such a Condition, take other ways to get their Liberty, but they will miss their Expectation. But by the Gospel, many Prisoners have been set at Liberty. *Isai. 42. 6. I will*

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give thee for a Covenant of the People, for a Light of the Gentiles; to open the blind Eyes, to bring out the Prisoners from the Prison, and them that sit in Darkness, out of the Prison-House.

Q. How are Sinners in the Condition of Prisoners?

A. They are Guilty of many Crimes.

When Men are shut up in Prison, it is generally either for Debts or for Crimes; so ungodly Men are very Criminal: They are Transgressors of the Law; they came Sinners into the World. Psal. 51. 5. Behold I was shapen in Iniquity, and in Sin did my Mother conceive me. And as they grow up, they become more Guilty. They are Guilty of Sins of Omission, and Commission: Of Sins in Thought, Word and Deed. They are Guilty of Sins by Perpetration, and by Participation with others: Sins against the Law, and against the Gospel. They are very Guilty, and liable to the Condemnation of the Law. They have been led away with Temptation. The Corruptions of their hearts work very Powerfully in them. Rom. 7. 5. When we were, in the Flesh, the Motions of Sins which were by the Law, did work in our Members to bring forth Fruit of

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to Death. And tho' some of them are under great Restraints, yet their Hearts are Fountains of Iniquity. Job 15. 16. *How much more Filthy and Abominable is Man, who Drinketh in Iniquity like Water?* Jer. 6. 7. *As a Fountain casteth out its Waters, so she casteth out her Wickedness.* Mens Sins are more than the Hairs of their Heads. The most moral Man is far from being Innocent. God hath a great deal to charge upon them. They Sin daily, and their Iniquities are infinite.

2. *They are reserved to Judgment.* The Evil Angels are reserved in the Chains of God's Providence to the Judgment of the great Day. Jud. 6. As Prisoners are kept in Durance, that they may be forth coming at the Affizes, so these Men are bound over unto Judgment, and preserved that they may appear when God calls for them. They are preserved from Annihilation, and kept by God unto that time. They are not discharged from their Guilt, but God has them in hold, that they may be brought forth when he calls for them. Some of them could be glad to be turned into their first nothing, but that will not be allowed. They are kept by the Providence

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dence of God, ready to appear at God's Tribunal at the first Call. Men that are kept in Prison, are ready to be brought forth at any time when the Judge calls for them. They are not suffered to wander about that they can't be found; so these Men are kept in a readiness to make their Appearance. *There is an appointed Time to them, Job 7. 1. God calls for some of them in younger Days, Job 36. 14. They Die in Youth, and their Life is among the Unclean.* And some in elder Days, they are never to seek, God has them always in hold.

3. *They are secured from making their Escape.* Prisoners are wont to be in Chains, *Psal. 105. 18. He was laid in Iron.* So Peter, *Act. 12. 6, 7. Peter was Sleeping between two Soldiers, bound with two Chains.*— And his Chains fell off his Hands. So Paul and Silas were secured, their Feet were made fast in the Stocks, *Act. 16. 24.* So Sinners are under such Bonds, that they cannot make their Escape. The Law binds them over to Punishment. *1 Cor. 15. 56. The Sting of Death is Sin, and the strength of Sin is the Law.* And they can't free themselves from that Obligation. If they could satisfy the Law, they might be at Liberty, but they can.

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cannot. Wealth will not do it. Math. 16. 26. *What shall be given in Exchange for the Soul?* Their Works will not do it. Rom. 3. 20. *By the Works of the Law shall no Flesh living be justified in the sight of God.* Calamities and Sufferings will not do it. They are but the beginning of Sorrows. Rom. 6. 23. *The Wages of Sin is Death.* And they are fettered with their own Corruptions. There is a way to escape, if they could believe in Christ they should be delivered; but they are *shut up in Unbelief*, Rom. 11. 32. They are like a Man bound down, that he cannot stir Hand or Foot. They are not able to make use of their Opportunity. They are wholly under the Power of their Corruption. Joh. 5. 44. *How can you Believe?*

4. *They are committed to a Jailor.* Prisoners are committed to the Custody of the Keeper of the Prison. Gen. 39. 21. And the Jailor many times keeps the Prisoners at Work. Judg. 16. 21. *Samson did Grind in the Prison-House.* And many times he uses them hardly, Act. 16. 24. So ungodly Men are committed to Satan as their Jailor, and he is suffered to Tyrannize over them. He keeps them hard at Work, and Rules over them. He is a Prince over them. Eph. 2. 2.

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They are Servants to him. He makes some of them to walk in ways of Debauchery. They Lye, and Steal, and commit Whoredom. He makes others Drudges to the World and their Pride. He keeps them busie at Work, and many times Afflicts them, and Frights them with Imaginations of Poverty and Disgrace, and Losses, and Calamities; and if they are labouring after their Escape, he Torments them. Sometimes he Terrifies them that their Day is past; that they have committed the unpardonable Sin; that God has given them up to hardness; that if they entertain Convictions, and mind eternal Things, they will be Distracted, or so Distressed, that they will be forced to lay violent Hands on themselves.

Q. How doth the Gospel set them at Liberty?

A. 1. The Discoveries of the Gospel do encourage Sinners to accept of the Liberty that is offered. God is offering Liberty in the Gospel; and these offers by the Blessing of God, do prevail upon many Souls. 1 Cor. 4. 15. I have Begotten you through the Gospel. Jam. 1. 18. Of his own Will begat he us by the Word of Truth. Men are wont to make

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for Christ will save all them that will
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many Objections against the Calls of God; but when they have the spiritual Discovery of the Gospel, it prevails upon the Heart, and conquers all the Opposition of the Soul, and the Men come to Christ. Whenever Men are convinced of the Glory of Christ, and of the Truth of the Gospel, their Will is gained, and they are not afraid to come to Christ. Joh. 6. 45. *Every one that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me.* There is Encouragement enough in the Gospel, and when their Eyes are opened to see it, they cannot tarry away from Christ. They will come without any delay. They see that they may safely come. The Gospel banishes the Fears that they were under. When they see the Gospel, they prize Christ; they love to come; it pleaseth them to depend upon him. Then they are afraid to stay away, and neglect their Opportunity any longer, they should be Enemies to their own Souls if they should. Rom. 1. 16. *The Gospel is the power of God unto Salvation, to every one that believeth.*

2. *The Sentence of the Gospel doth discharge them from their Bonds.* When the Sinner has accepted the offer, he hath performed

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the Terms of the Covenant, and now the Sentence of Condemnation is taken off. Rom. 8. 1. *There is no Condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.* The Debt is cancelled, and all his Sins are pardoned. Act. 10. 43. *And to him give all the Prophets Witness, that through his Name, whosoever believeth in him, shall receive Remission of Sins.* The Law looks on him as Innocent; the Man is brought into an estate of Justification and Adoption. Rom. 5. 1. *Being justified by Faith, we have Peace with God.* Joh. 1. 12. *To as many as received him, gave he power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on his Name.* They are declared Heirs of Life, Joh. 3. 36. *He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting Life.* Now the Man has Security under God's Hand, that he shall be saved. His Obligation to suffer the Wrath of God is taken off. The Word of God gives Judgment for him, that he is not Guilty. God don't deny to Pardon him. God don't leave the Matter in Suspence whether he shall be pardoned or not. He don't defer to do it, but in the same Minute gives him an Acquittance from all his Guilt. Act. 13. 39. *All that believe are justified from all things, from which*

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they could not be justified by the Law of Moses. And then God delivers them from the power of Satan, they are no longer under his Custody; he is not their Jailor; he Tempts them still, but they are not in his power as they were. Satan is laid under greater Restraints than formerly, and not suffered to Tyrannize as he did. They are committed to the Guardianship of the holy Angels. Hebr. i. 14. *Are they not all Ministering Spirits, sent forth to Minister to them that shall be Heirs of Salvation?*

I USE. Of Reproof to those that don't make this Use of the Gospel, that they may be set at Liberty. Some take Notice of their Opportunity, and are bestirring of themselves that they may be set at Liberty. They are not discouraged, though they find Difficulties in the way, and are sensible of the uncertainty of the Event, but take a great deal of Pains. If they should obtain it, they will be happy Men; but this is not the Case with all: Some don't regard to make Improvement of their Time: They are very much to blame. It is a great Priviledg to be set at Liberty. This was Purchased with a great Price, as he says, Act. 22. 28. *With a great Sum obtained I this Free-*

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dom. Christ Jesus was *Anointed of God to Preach this*. Isai. 61. 1. But some Men don't make Use of the Gospel to get Liberty, but make a very contrary Use of it.

I. *Some make Use of it only to get Notional Knowledge*. Some read the Scriptures, hearken to the Preaching of the Gospel, study the Controversies that are in the World about Matters of Religion, that they may get Notional Knowledge; and they are puffed up with that. 1 Cor. 8. 1 *Knowledge puffeth up*. They take delight to know what Men say, to be able to Discourse about those Things, and to dispute against Errors. They love to be able to give an Account what one Party and the other has to say for their Opinions. They are like the *Greeks that sought after Wisdom*. 1 Cor. 1. 22. They are not willing to be Ignorant of the Scriptures: They are willing to see the Reason of what is taught, and to be able to vindicate their Profession, but don't regard to get this Liberty. They neglect the great design of the Gospel: They don't answer God's end in sending the Gospel. Can they imagine that God's design was to fill the Heads of Men with Notions, and to gratify an inquisitive Humour? Surely

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Surely God's design was to deliver Men from Misery. These Men neglect that which makes the Gospel Profitable: They cast off the care of the Wellfare of their Souls, and neglect blessed Advantages to be Happy. It is just as if a sick Man should dispute about the Composition of a Medicine that will Cure him, and neglect to take it and so die. Or as if a Man should Labour to satisfy his Curiosity about the Dimensions and Materials of a Castle, and neglect to put himself into it, and so Perish. All those that dont receive the Gospel will surely Perish. Heb. 2. 3. *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation?*

2. *Some make Use of it to harden their Hearts in Sin.* This is the way of many Men; they hear that God hath a design of Grace; that he hath sent Christ to suffer for our Sins; that great Sinners may be pardoned; that the Threatnings are only Conditional in case of final Impenitency; and they take occasion to harden their Hearts in Sin, Jud. 4. *They turn the Grace of God into Lasciviousness.* They think there is no great danger; they are not afraid of the Justice and Jealousy of God, because

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he offers Pardon to them; they think that he loves them, because he freely offers Pardon to them; they think there is not much Evil in Sin, because God offers Pardon, they think he will continue so to do, and he will wait upon them, and so they harden their Hearts, and are bold to indulge themselves in Sin, and in no haste to turn to God. This is unreasonable. *David* says, *There is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared.* Psal. 130. 4. But these Men say, *There is forgiveness with God, therefore he is not to be feared.* But though there is a way of Salvation, yet many that hear it, are never the better for it. Multitudes go from under the Light of the Gospel to the Blackness of Darkness. 2 Cor. 4. 3. *If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost. It is a Savour of Death unto Death to many Men.* 2 Cor. 2. 16. The Mercy of God will not Affront his Justice. Men shall have no occasion to Reproach that, Exod. 34. 7. *Though he is Gracious and Merciful, yet he will by no means clear the Guilty.* These Men turn the Gospel into Poyson to them; and if they continue to harden their Hearts in Sin, they will as surely Perish, as if there were no Gospel, as if Christ had never

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never come into the World. What will the Gospel signify to them that reject it? The Blood of Christ will not Heal, where it is not applied.

2 USE. *See how great a benefit the Gospel is to many Men.* Indeed there be a great many Men that are not the better for it; they have bought Bibles, and have Read often in them, and heard the Gospel preached, but they are not the better, but the worse for it. It had been better for them, if they had never heard a Sermon, never seen one Leaf of the Bible, if they had lived in *Turkey*. Math. 11. 22. *It will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the Day of Judgment, than for them.* But it is very beneficial to others: It is more advantage to them, than all the Wealth of the World would be. They are set at Liberty thereby. Luk. 4. 18. *It sets at Liberty those that were Bruised.* Such as were in the Condition of Prisoners.

1. *They are delivered from the danger of Condemnation.* Wo to those Men that shall be condemned at the last Day. They shall be cursed with a Witness. You have the Sentence, Math. 25. 41. *Depart ye cursed into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his*

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his Angels. But these Men are out of the reach of that Curse. They are in danger of some smaller Calamities, Pains, Sicknesses, Reproaches, Losses, but not of Condemnation. The Day of Judgment will be a Glorious and Comfortable Day to them. That is a time of Refreshing from the Presence of the Lord. There shall not be one Hair of their Head singed, nor the smell of Fire pass upon them. There is abundant Security that they shall not be Condemned. They are made meet for Heaven; they are become the Children of God: They are interested in the Righteousness of Christ: They have the Covenant of Grace to secure them: Death will do them no hurt; they shall be absolved in the Day of Judgment. Joh. 5. 24. *They shall not enter into Condemnation, but are passed from Death to Life.*

2. *From the Expectation of Condemnation.* Many Men are in a dreadful Condition, because of the Expectation of Condemnation. They are a Terror to themselves. Job 15. 21. *A dreadful Sound is in their Ears.* They are under an Expectation to hear Christ saying, *Depart from me, I know you not.* They are afraid by Day and by Night, *afraid*

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afraid when they Work and when they Eat. This takes away the sweetness of all their Enjoyments: Nothing that they have is any great Comfort to them. But those Men that are set at Liberty by the Gospel, are delivered from these Expectations: They have their Hours of Temptation, and long for more Assurance, but their Consciences are healed. Rom. 5. 1, 2. *Being justified by Faith, we have Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by Faith into this Grace wherein we stand, and Rejoyce in hope of the Glory of God.* They have a great deal of Comfort under their Afflictions, under this Consideration, that God hath delivered them from Wrath to come. And sometimes they can say as Job, Job 19. 25, 26, 27. *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that though Worms destroy this Body, yet in my Flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for my self, and mine Eyes shall behold, &c.*

3. *They are delivered from Satan's Government.* He is permitted to Afflict them, and Tempt them, and cast in fiery Darts, yet his Government is taken away, he is cast out. They are rescued out of his Hand, *rescued from the power of Satan, Act. 26. 18.*

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They are delivered out of the *Kingdom of Darkness*, that is Satan's Kingdom. Col. 1. 13. And God will tread Satan under their Feet shortly. Satan is under greater Restraints than he was, and they are fortified against his Temptations more than they were; and they are committed to the care of the holy Angels, who are doing many good Offices for them. Heb. 1. 14. *They are ministering Spirits to them.*

3 USE. Of Examination, whether you be set at Liberty by the Gospel. Some Men need not trouble themselves to make any narrow search, for it is a plain Case that they are not set at Liberty; but there are two sorts that need to examine this Matter. Some Men have some Fears and Jealousies of themselves, yet have preponderating Hopes: And some Men are not without Hopes, yet have preponderating Fears. It concerns both these sorts accurately to examine the Thing. Men may hear the Gospel, yet not be set at Liberty by it. Many that hear the Word deceive themselves. They may have a large understanding of the Gospel, yet not be set at Liberty by it. Men may be affected with it, yet not be set at Liberty by it. Men may be stirred up

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to reform their Lives, yet not be set at Liberty. There be but a few comparatively that are set at Liberty by it, therefore examine.

Signs, 1. *Have you seen the Divine Authority of the Gospel?* God is said to be the Authour of the Gospel, and therefore it is called the Gospel of God. Rom. 1. 1. *Separated unto the Gospel of God.* It is established by the Faithfulness of God. The Declarations of it are Gods, and the Promises of it are Gods; and you are able to evince it by several Arguments that God is the Authour of it; but have you seen the Divine Authority of it? Men never see it to be infallibly true and certain, until they see the Divine Authority of it. They can't indeed believe it, whatever Perswasion they have of it, till they hear the Voice of God in it; then they see the Divine Authority of it, when they receive it not as the Judgment of Wise and Good Men, but as it is *indeed the Word of God*; and they are convinced that it is the Word of the Faithful God. 1 Thes. 2. 13. *Ye received it as it is indeed the Word of God, which worketh effectually in you that believe.* Joh. 5. 25. *The Dead shall hear the Voice of the Son of God and live.*

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Live. When the Authority of God in the Gospel is seen, then Christ appears Glorious and promises Certain.

2. Have you felt a divine Power with the Gospel? There is a divine Power going with the Gospel to some Men. 1 Cor. 1. 23. Christ is the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God. Rom. 1. 16. I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto Salvation. The Gospel where it sets Men at Liberty, has a Power to draw Men to Christ. Some Men complain that they are not able to come to Christ; they would do it but they have not Liberty; but indeed there is a Power to draw the Heart: It has a prevailing Power over all Fears and Objections. Joh. 6. 45. Every one that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me. If the Arm of the Lord be revealed Men will believe. Isai. 53. 1. When Men's Eyes are opened to understand Christ and his Death and Resurrection, those Doctrines come with Power upon the Heart. Phil. 3. 10. That I may know him, and the Power of his Resurrection. 1 Pet. 1. 3. He hath begotten us to a lively Hope, by the Resurrection of Christ from the Dead. So there is a regenerating Power in the Gospel, it

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doth powerfully dispose their Hearts to love and fear God; and they will hate their Sins, and cast off the Works of Darkness, and live all their Days in a way of Obedience.

4 *USE Of Exhortation. Labour in it, that you may be set at Liberty by the Gospel.* If there were no Hope of being set at Liberty, it would be a vain Thing to strive in it; but though it be Hopeless for Men that are damned, yet it is not Hopeless for you. It is uncertain whether you will ever attain Liberty, but yet there is Hope of it. Sometimes the Thing appears very Dark to you; but whatever Difficulty there be in it, yet it is possible. You have taken several Methods that you might be set at Liberty, but hitherto you have been disappointed; and indeed you must never expect it by any other Means but only by the Gospel. Labour therefore that you may be set at Liberty by that. You say your present Condition is Doleful, and you dread to continue in it, but there is Hope of Deliverance by the Gospel. Christ Jesus has purchased Deliverance; he has paid a sufficient Price for your Redemption. He gave his Life a Ransom for many. 1 Cor.

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6. 20. *You are bought with a Price.* And God offers Deliverance to you through him. *Isai. 61. 1. He Proclaims the opening of the Prison to them that are Bound.* And God has promised that some shall be set at Liberty by him. His Work is, *To bring out the Prisoners from Prison, and them that sit in Darkness out of the Prison-House.* *Isai. 42. 7. Yea, many Persons have been set at Liberty Formerly and Laterly by the Gospel.* There has been a great deal of Experience of the Efficacy of the Gospel this way. *Col. 1. 13. He hath delivered us from the power of Darkness, and translated us into the Kingdom of his dear Son.* Let then this be your Care, that you may be set at Liberty by the Gospel.

DIRECTIONS, 1. Don't seek slightly! This is the fault of many Persons, intimated, *Luk. 13. 24. Many seek, and are not able to enter.* That is complained of, *Isai. 64. 7. There is none that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.* Some Men seek, but it is with too much indifferency of Spirit. *The Violent take the Kingdom of Heaven by force.* *Math. 11. 12. But many Men are dull in their Prayers; they are not Earnest and Importunate with God; they are not*

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Diligent

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Diligent in Reading and Hearing, that they may learn Advantages and take them; that they learn their Disadvantages and avoid them. They don't watch against Temptations; they comply with some Practices that are an hindrance to them: They excuse themselves many times from that which might promote their Conversion. Though they desire Conversion, yet their Hearts are much upon the World; they lay too much weight on worldly Things; their Hearts are divided between *God* and *Mammon*. It is no great Wonder that such Men don't obtain; lazy Seekings issue in Disappointments: Lazy Seeking will not conquer Difficulties. Yea, when they seek slightly, they provoke God to deny them. God may say, *It will not break their Hearts if they be denied*. The Reason why many People seek after a slight Manner, is because they are not much afraid of going to Hell. Either they want a sense of the Dreadfullness of Damnation, or flatter themselves as if they were in no eminent Danger of it. If they were thoroughly scared, they would be more earnest in their Endeavours; Senselessness begets Slightliness. If their Consciences were so wounded that
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they could not bear it, they would be more violent in their Endeavours. The Pretence that they make for their Dullness, is, that they are afraid there is no Hope for them; they fear their Case is desperate, and that weakens their Hearts, and makes them to be dispirited; but the true Reason is not that they want Hope, but they want Fears. If the *Terrours of Death* did compass them about, and the *Pains of Hell* get hold upon them, they would not say, *There was a Lyon in the Way*, but would be forcing their Way through all Discouragements and dark Appearances.

2. *Don't imagine that you must get some Excellency to prepare you for Christ.* Men among us are principled in that, that Faith is the Condition of Salvation, and the Righteousness of Jesus Christ, is the meritorious Cause of it: But they imagine that they must get some Excellency to prepare them for Christ. They think they may not come to him till they have made their Hearts better. They must love God, and be sorry for their Sins, and make the Glory of God their End. They must delight in Sabbaths, and so they are striving to make their Hearts better, and if that were attained,

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they hope that God would not be so Angry with them; he would be more inclinable to pity them, and save them through Christ; and they labour to dress up their Hearts, and to get lovely Qualifications to draw God's Heart towards them. They think it would be a presumptuous Thing for them to thrust themselves on Christ, and on the Grace of God until they be better, and so they strive to make themselves better. They hear that there must be Preparation for Christ, and that there must be a Work of Humiliation before Faith, and they strive after such an Humiliation as has an Excellency in it to commend them to God. They quite mistake Humiliation; but if ever you would obtain Christ, you must see the badness of your own Hearts. As long as you are reaching after any Excellency in your selves, you will reject Christ. You must see your self Poor, Rev. 3. 17. Before ever Paul came to Christ, *Sin revived and he died.* Rom. 7. 5.

3. Don't give way to an objecting Spirit against the Gospel. We Read of some that the Gospel was hid unto; That the God of this World had blinded their Minds. 2 Cor. 4

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3, 4. And we Read, that Christ Crucified, was to the Jews a Stumbling-block, and to the Greeks Foolishness. 1 Cor. 1. 22. One great Thing that keeps Men from Christ is, that Satan and their own Hearts are filling of them with Objections against the Gospel. Sometimes they argue as if God had not Mercy enough to Pardon their Sins. Sometimes they are arguing as if it were uncertain whether the Scriptures were the Word of God. Sometimes they argue from the differing Opinions that are in the World about the way of Salvation. Sometimes they are stumbled at the Afflictions of those that believe on Christ. Sometimes from the Falls of those that make a great Profession. Sometimes from the outward Meanness and Sufferings of Jesus Christ. Such Reasonings of Heart, are a great hindrance to Mens receiving of the Gospel. While Men entertain such Objections, they strengthen their Unbelief, and keep themselves from a preparedness to entertain the Gospel. Men that do indulge themselves in a Lust of objecting against the Gospel, do hinder themselves from receiving it. Paul describes Unbelievers, that they are Contentionous, and obey not the Truth. Rom. 2. 8.

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Unbelief is naturally Blindness, but if Men give way to an objecting Spirit, they thereby contract further degrees of Blindness, and are more opposite to the entertaining of the Gospel.

(James)
Lynn

The Seventh Sermon.

Luke 4. 19.

To Preach the acceptable Year of the Lord.

HERE is another Expression of the Service of Christ, viz. to give Notice of the acceptable Year of the Lord. This seems to be an Allusion to the Proclaiming of the Year of Jubilee, spoken of, Lev. 25. 9. *Then thou shalt cause the Trumpet of the Jubilee to Sound on the tenth Day of the seventh Month.*

Q. *What is to be understood by a Year?*

A. *Sometimes a Year is taken properly for that time wherein the Sun is fullfilling its Course, 365 Days. But sometimes it is taken*

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for an indefinite Time, be it longer or shorter. *Isai. 34. 8. For it is the Day of the Lords Vengeance, and the Year of Vengeance for the Controversie of Zion.* So a Day is sometimes taken for an indefinite Time. *Isai. 2. 12. For the Day of the Lord of Hosts shall be upon every one that is Proud and Lofty.*

Q. Why is it said to be the acceptable Year of the Lord?

A. Epiphanius takes it to be a Year wherein the Lord was acceptable unto Men, and saith, That the first Year of Christs Ministry was pleasing, but afterwards they took Offence. But this is a Mistake; for they took Offence this very Day. Luk. 4. 28, 29. All that were in the Synagogue when they heard these things, were filled with Wrath, and rose up and thrust him out of the City, and led him unto the brow of the Hill whereon their City was Built, that they might cast him down Headlong. But the Meaning is, The Year of God's good Pleasure and Favour, with the respect to the Preaching the Gospel to the Poor, the healing the Broken-hearted, &c. the clear Preaching of the Gospel, and the saving Efficacy of it.

DOCTRINE. There are some special Seasons wherein God doth in a remarkable Man-

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*ner revive Religion among his People. God doth not always carry on his Work in the Church in the same Proportion. As it is in Nature, there be great Vicissitudes; there is Day and Night, Summer and Winter, the Moon Waxes and Wanes, the Sea Flows and Ebbs, and as it is in the civil State, there is a time of War and a time of Peace, times of Plenty and times of Scarcity, times of Health and times of Sickness, so it is in the Church. There are some times when the Hearts of Men are made hard. *Isai. 63. 17. Why hast thou hardened our Hearts from thy Fear, and made us to Err from thy ways?* So there be times wherein there is a plentiful Effusion of the Spirit of God, and Religion is in a more flourishing Condition. *Math. 11. 12. From the Days of John the Baptist, the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth Violence, and the Violent take it by force. Isai. 44. 3. I will pour my Spirit upon thy Seed, & my Blessing on thy Offspring. Ezek. 11. 19. And I will give them one Heart, and I will put a new Spirit within you, and will take the Heart of Stone out of your Flesh, and will give you an Heart of Flesh. The like we have, Ezek. 36. 26.**

Q. How

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Q. How is it with a People when Religion is revived?

A. 1. *Saints are quickned.* It contributes much to the flourishing of Religion, when Righteous Men flourish in Holiness, as it is foretold, Psal. 92. 12. *The Righteous shall flourish like a Palm-tree, they shall grow like the Cedar in Lebanon.* There be times of Temptation, when godly Men are in a flourishing Condition. Math 25. 5. *While the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.* They grow Worldly, and Proud, and Formal, and don't maintain much of the Life of Godliness. And there be times when their Hearts are lifted up in the ways of God, as is said of Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. 17. 6. *When the Weak are as David.* When their Souls are in a prosperous Condition, and they are in gracious Frames of Spirit, going on from *Strength to Strength.* Sometimes they run the ways of God's Commandments, because God enlarges their Hearts. Psal. 119. 32. It is as with them, 1 Thes. *Your Faith groweth exceedingly, and the Charity of every one of you all towards each other aboundeth.* This mightily increaseth Holiness among a People.

2. *Sinners are Converted.* God makes the Gospel

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Gospel at times to be very Powerful. So it
 was in the Primitive times, Rom. 15. 29.
I am sure when I come unto you, I shall come in
the fullness of the Blessing of the Gospel of Christ.
 The Gospel was written for the End that
Men might believe and be saved. Joh. 20. 21.
 And it is preached for that End; and
 sometimes God gives great Success to it.
 Act. 26. 18. *I send thee to open the blind Eyes*
to turn them from Darkness to Light, and from
the power of Satan unto God. So John's
 Preaching was very much blessed. Mal. 4. 6.
He shall turn the Heart of the Fathers to the
Children, and the Heart of the Children to
their Fathers. This is Old and Young. There
 is a mighty Change wrought in a little
 Time: They that were Dead, are made
 Alive, and they that were Lost are Found.
 The Gospel is made a *savour of Life to man-*
ny. Sometimes there is great Complaint
 for want of this. Psal. 12. 1. *Help: Lord,*
for the godly Man ceaseth; the Righteous fail
from among the Children of Men. So Isai. 53.
 1. *Lord, who hath believed our Report? and to*
whom is the Arm of the Lord revealed? At
 other times the Number of Saints is great-
 ly multiplied. Act. 9. 31. *The Churches*
were edified, and walking in the fear of the
Lord.

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Lord, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost were multiplied.

3. *Many that are not Converted, do become more Religious.* When Israel went out of Egypt, there was a mixt Multitude that went with them. So when God is pleased to Convert a Number, there be many others that have a common Work of the Spirit on their Hearts; they are affected with their Condition, Reform their evil Manners, and engage in Religious Duties, and attain to considerable Zeal, and are full of Religious Affections. So it was in Christ's time; there was great flocking about him. So by the Preaching of *John* many were affected. *Luk. 3. 10, 12, 14. The People said, What shall we do? And the Publicans what shall we do? And the Soldiers what shall we do?* When God works savingly upon some, it is frequent that others have common Illuminations, whereby great Reformation is wrought, and the Reputation of Religion advanced, and People are disposed to keep the external Covenant; and so much Wrath is prevented.

Concerning this Work of God in reviving Religion, you may observe these Four Things.

I. Ob-

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1. Observation. This reviving is sometimes more General and sometimes more Particular. It is more General, when it is throughout a Country, when in all Parts of a Land there is a turning to God. That was prophesied of, Ezek. 36. 25, 26, 27. *Then will I sprinkle clean Water upon you, & ye shall be clean from all your Filthiness, and from all your Idols will I cleanse you, &c.* So it was about Luther's time, when some Nations broke off from Popery, and imbraced the Gospel. Sometimes the Country doth generally Decline. Gal. 3. 1. *O Foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that you should not obey the Truth?* But sometimes this reviving is more Particular, when in some particular Towns Religion doth revive and flourish. So 2 Thes. 1. 3. *Their Faith grew exceedingly.* Rev. 3. 8. *Thou hast a little Strength, and hast kept my Word, and not denied my Name.* At the same time Sardis and Laodicea were in a declining Way: As sometimes it Rains upon one City, and doth not Rain upon another. Am. 4. 7. So it is with God's Raining Righteousness. There is many times a great difference in the same Country; There is a Blast upon Corn in one part of a Land, when it flourishes in another; So it is in this Case. 2.

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2. Observation. *This reviving is sometimes of longer, and sometimes of shorter Continuance. Sometimes Religion flourishes in a Country for a great many Years together. So it did for twenty nine Years in the Days of Hezekiah. 2 Chron. 29. 1. So when God pours out his Spirit, sometimes the Work continues many Years. It began in John the Baptist's time, and continued several Years after the Death of Christ. Math. 11. 12. From the Days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth Violence. Compare this with Joh. 5. 25. The time is coming, and now is, when the Dead shall hear the Voice of the Son of God and live. But sometimes it is for a less space. We have reason to think that there was much of the converting Presence of God in Corinth for the space of a Year and half. Act. 18. 9, 10. Sometimes it is not so long. There is a great stirring for a little time, and then it fails. Though the same outward Means continue, yet there is not that Blessing going along with them.*

3. Observation. *God is very Arbitrary in this Matter. The People of God are Praying and Waiting for this Mercy. Hab. 3. 2. O Lord, revive thy Work in the midst of old*

Years,

*inspired men in
the midst of old
years, and in the
midst of old years,*

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Years, in the midst of Years make known; Wrath remember Mercy. Psal. 85. 6. Wilt thou revive us again, that thy People may Rejoyce in thee? But God will take his own time for this Mercy. As the Angel stirred the Waters of Bethesda, at some certain Seasons, and they waited for that time, Joh. 5. 4. so it is in this Case. There is a stated time for the rising of the Sun, and for the setting of the same, and so for the return of the Spring; but the returns of the Spirit are very Arbitrary. Sometimes God puts his People to wait longer for them; sometimes not so long: It is in this Case, as it is with the inward Consolations of godly Men. God takes his own time to Refresh their Hearts, and Seal them up to the Day of Redemption. No Man can tell beforehand when the Work of God shall Prosper in this or that Place. Act. 1. 6, 7. It is not for you to know the Times and the Seasons that the Father has put in his own Power. When God hardens a People, none can tell how long that shall be. Isai. 6. 11. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the Cities be wasted without Inhabitant, and the Houses without Man, and the Land be utterly desolate.

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4. *It is beyond us to determine what particular Design God hath in it at this or that time.* When God Converts a considerable Number among a People, we know that the design is to prepare them for Salvation. *Act. 3. 19. Repent and be Converted, that your Sins may be blotted out, when the times of Refreshing shall come from the Presence of the Lord.* But what his particular Design is in that Work we cannot tell. It may possibly be to prepare the Place for some great Temptation, that they may stand in a time of great Tryal that he may bring upon them; that they may be strengthened and not deny his Name: Or it may be to prepare them for some Affliction that he intends to bring upon them, that they may carry the better under it: Or it may be to lay a Foundation for Mercy for the next Generation, that there may be a Number that may uphold the power of Godliness in time to come. Or it may be to gather in his Elect, before he removes the Means of Grace, and takes away his Ordinances.

USE. *Learn from hence, that the Church of God is subject to great Changes. Sometimes Religion flourishes, and sometimes languishes. It is indeed so with parti-*

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cular Souls: Sometimes they go on from Strength to Strength, and their Hearts are lifted up in the ways of God. They are like *Green Olive-Trees in the House of the Lord, they flourish like the Palm-Tree, they grow like the Cedar in Lebanon.* And at other times they are in a slumbering Condition; they are like sick Men that are unfit for Service, like Trees in Winter. So it is with the Church of God; there is but little of the presence of God among them; there is a great scarcity of Godly Men; Iniquity abounds, and the Love of many waxes Cold. At other Times Religion is the great thing that is minded; Men are *taking the Kingdom of Heaven with Violence*: They honour their Profession, and their Light shines before Men, so that they *Glorify their Father that is in Heaven*. Religion is in great Reputation, and there goes a great Blessing with the Ordinances of God. It is as Cant. 2. 11, 12, 13. *The Winter is past, the Rain is over and gone, the Flowers appear on the Earth, the time of the singing of Birds is come, and the Voice of the Turtle is heard in our Land; the Fig-tree putteth forth her Green Figs, and the Vines with the tender Grape give a good Smell: Arise my Love, my fair one & come away.*

I. When

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1. *When the Church is in a flourishing Condition, we must not let upon it that they will always be so.* If it be a time of Plenty in a Land, yet the Case may be much altered after a while, as it was in *Egypt*, Gen. 41: 53, 54. If it be a time of Health, there may be after a while a sickly Time. So if Religion flourisheth, it doth not follow that it will always do so. There may come a Time of Hardning: God may withdraw his Spirit: Many Temptations may arise: There may be a Change of the Generation, and Religion may be buried in the Graves of old Men. A Field that was wont to flourish with Corn, may come to be overgrown with Thorns. *A fruitful Land may be turned into Barrenness.* Psal. 107: 34. Religion flourished in the time of *Jehoshaphat*, but it withered in the time of *Jehoram*. It flourished in the time of *Hezekiah*, but it withered in the time of *Manasseh*. Many times there rises up another Generation *that know not the Lord.* Judg. 2: 10. The People embrace corrupt Principles, & addict themselves to bad Practices, and the Spirit of Religion is much lost in a little Time.

2. *When the Church is in a withering Condition,*

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dition, we must not conclude that it will be always so. If Iniquity prevails much among a People, and they don't regard the threatenings of God's Word, don't make Improvement of Judgments, but go on every one in his own way, as the Horse rusheth into the Battle, the Gospel is made light of, and Prophaneſs and other Wickedneſs increaſe in the Land, and the whole Head is Sick, and the whole Heart Faint, yet it doth not follow that it will be always thus, and that Religion will be loſt, and the Kingdom of God be taken from them. Sometimes it is ſo, but it doth not from thence appear that it will be ſo: All that are Sick dont Die; Religion may recover; Holineſs may get up again; there may be a flourishing Summer after an hard Winter. Religion revived in the Time of Joſiah, and in the Time of John the Baptiſt. There may in a little time be another Face of Things; God may raiſe up Instruments, and bleſs their Endeavours for the recovery of Religion. Hoſ. 14. 5, 6, 7. I will be as the Dew unto Iſrael; he ſhall grow as the Lillie, and caſt forth his Roots as Lebanon. His Branches ſhall ſpread, and his Beauty ſhall be as the Olive-Tree, and his Smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his Shadow

(hall)

*Shall dwell under his Shadow
and his Smell shall be as the Olive-Tree
and his Beauty shall be as the Olive-Tree*

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shall return, they shall revive as the Corn, and grow as the Vine; the Scent thereof shall be as the Wine of Lebanon.

2 USE. *We should beg of God, that Religion may revive in this Land. We have Occasion to go before God for many Things: We have need to beg Peace, and Health, and Plenty; but especially we have Reason to be earnest with God for this Mercy: This is a Thing of greatest Consequence. When God pours out his Spirit on his People, they are Days of great Mercy. Isai. 54. 11, 12, 13. Oh thou afflicted and tossed with Tempest, and not comforted, I will lay thy Stones with fair Colours, and lay thy Foundations with Sapphires. I will make thy Windows of Agates, and thy Gates of Carbuncles, and all thy Borders of pleasant Stones. And all thy Children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the Peace of thy Children. Hereby the Land is secured from Degeneracy. Many are fitted hereby to keep God's Covenant: Hereby a Way is made for outward Blessings: Hereby a Foundation is laid for Salvation. Men should not Pray for this in a formal Way, but with Groanings that cannot be uttered. Psal. 90. 16, 17. Let thy Work appear unto thy Servants, and thy Glory unto their*

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their Children. And let the Beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish thou the Work of our Hands, yea, the Work of our Hands establish thou it.

Consider, 1. *There is great need of this.* For want of this, the Land is mightily Corrupted, and Sin prevails greatly in all Places, and the Profession that Men make is dishonoured. Strangers are ready to say, *Is this the City that Men call the Perfection of Beauty, the Joy of the whole Earth?* As Lam. 2. 15. For the want of this; there is so much Injustice and Oppression, many are like Birds and Beasts of Prey. For the want of this, there is so much Luxury and Voluptuousness. For want of this, there is so much breach of Promise, Sabbath-breaking and Prophaness. If Men fear God, it would not be so. Jer. 32. 40. *I will put my Fear in their Hearts, that they shall not depart away from me.* For want of this, there are so many Judgments. Judg. 2. 10. *And there arose a Generation that knew not the Lord.* And V. 14. *And the Anger of the Lord was hot against Israel.* And for want of this, many lie in a perishing Condition. Joh. 3. 3. *Except a Man be Born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.*

2. *This*

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2. *This is very acceptable to God.* God delights to hear such Prayers. When Men Pray for that that is more directly for his Glory, and for the good of Mens Souls, God is pleased with it. When Solomon prayed for himself, *That he might have a Wise and Understanding Heart to Govern his People according to the Will of God,* the Saying pleased the Lord. So when Men Pray that God's Will may be done in the Land, God is pleased therewith. This has been the Spirit of holy Men. Many times People are earnestly crying for outward Mercies, and God despises their Prayers. *Hof. 7. 14. They have not cried unto me with their Hearts, when they howled upon their Beds: They assemble themselves for Corn and Wine, and they Rebel against me.* But 'tis very acceptable to God, when his People are seeking to him for this Mercy. This is the main Thing that he hath taught us to Pray for. *Math. 6. 9, 10. Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done on Earth, as it is done in Heaven.* Paul begs Prayers on this Account, *2 Thes. 3. 1. Brethren Pray for us, that the Word of the Lord may have free Course and be glorified, even as it is with you.*

3. *There is Encouragement to beg this.*

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There be Encouragements in the Word of God. We have Promises, *That Christ Jesus shall save many.* Isai. 49. 6. And Religion had need to be revived, else few will be saved: But *the Children of the Kingdom will go into outer Darkness.* Yea, there are Promises, *That the Spirit shall go with the Word.* Isai. 59. 1. And then the Word will Prevail. And though these Promises don't speak particularly of this Land, and this Time, yet they are Ground of Encouragement. They shew that God will do such Things many times for his Church, and that he would have them to plead for this Mercy. There is Encouragement also in the Providence of God. He hath many times revived his Work in *Israel* formerly, and we should take Notice of God's Mercy to our selves, once and again, and now a third Time.

3 USE. *It is very Doleful, when Persons at such Times are overlooked.* There are special Times, when in particular Towns there is a Noise among the dry Bones, and many are made sensible of their natural Condition, and are labouring after a part in Christ; when one and another are enquiring what they must do to be saved, and

Good bought in the

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and some have obtained Mercy; and at such times there be a Number of senseless Sinners, that are not concerned about their Souls, that mind nothing else but the World and their carnal Delights, while some are crying out, *What shall we do to be saved.* They are enquiring *what they shall Eat, and what they shall Drink, and wherewithal they shall be Cloathed.* Such a Spirit is Doleful at any time, much more at such a time when then there be a cloud of Witneses, a great many good Examples. They have as much need to seek as others; they have provoked God as much as others; they are as near the Grave as others. For Men to be regardless at such a time, is a great Sin, and a black Sign. When Men are like the *Barren Heath in the Wilderness, that seeth not Good when Good cometh,* it is much to be feared they will *sleep the sleep of Death.*

Especially 1. *When they are of suitable Years.* It is not so much wonder, if young Boys and Girls that are Giddy and Inconsiderate, don't mind the state of their Souls; Such Persons have little Knowledge and Experience; though they have need to remember their Creatour, yet Childhood & Youth are Vanity, and they are not come to the
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Maturity of their Judgment. But it looks more Darkly, when at such a time, Persons that are grown to Mens and Womens Estates, are not thoughtful of their eternal Condition, when many of their Standing are going towards Heaven. For them to be going towards Hell, it looks Awfully upon them, as if God did design to cast them off. When God makes the Arrows of his Word pierce the Hearts of others, and suffers them to flie over their Heads, it has a look as if God had no design of Mercy to them. Math. 24. 40. *Then shall two be in the Field, one shall be taken and the other left.*

2. *When they have been overlooked formerly at such a time.* Some of these Men have seen such Days formerly over and again. When others have been flowing to the goodness of God, God has made many to press into the Kingdom of Heaven, but they have not partook of that Mercy. The Prophet told him, 2 Kin. 7. 2. *Behold, thou shalt see it with thine Eyes, but thou shalt not Eat thereof.* So it hath been with these Men; the Opportunities have passed over, others have stepped in and been healed when the Waters were troubled; but these have not been healed. If it should be so again, there

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there would appear very little hopes of them. If all the Arrows are suffered to flie over their Heads, their Condition is exceeding Dangerous. It is not very often that there is a great stirring of the Spirit in one particular Town, and if Men have been overlooked twice or thrice at such times, it is much to be feared what will become of them. There is considerable Danger they will be Dead before there is such another Opportunity. Or if not, yet past that Age wherein God usually Works savingly on Men.

3. *When Men are left to a contrary Spirit.* It is bad, that when some are taking Pains for Salvation, that others are Idle. That when some are taking the Kingdom of Heaven by Force, others are not concerned about their Souls whether they Sink or Swim. But it may be, there be some that are like *Ismael*, that are Scoffing at the Work of God; that make a Derision of the Convictions of the Spirit. These Men are in the very high Way to Hell, and it would be no Wonder if God should bring such Judgments on them, *that all Israel might Fear and Tremble.* Such prophane People are shut from the Kingdom of God. They Laugh
now,

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now, but the time will come, that they shall Mourn for Sorrow of Heart, and Howl for Vexation of Spirit. They have Cause to fear that it will be with them as it was with *Esau*, Heb. 12. 17. *Afterwards, when he would have inherited the Blessing, he found no Place for Repentance, though he sought it carefully with Tears.*

3 USE. Persons should be very careful at such a time, that they do nothing to quench the Spirit. As we must be careful that we don't provoke God to take away his Spirit, so we must be careful that we don't quench the Spirit. 1 Thes. 5. 19. *Quench not the Spirit.* As we may not quench it in our selves, so we may not quench it in others. It is a singular Mercy that the Spirit of God is striving among us, and it is the fruit of Prayer. Many Souls may have occasion for ever to bless God on that Account; and we should make it our great Care that we do nothing to drive away the Spirit. Cant. 2. 7. *I charge you, O ye Daughters of Jerusalem, by the Roes and by the Hinds of the Field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my Love till he please.* If we would quench the Spirit, it may be long before he will return.

1. *By slighting this Work.* Some Men out of

and from the

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of an irreligious and prophane Spirit, are Deriding those that are in trouble of Mind, as if the Persons were over-run with Melancholy, and were more afraid than they have any reason to be, as if they were full of Fancies, and scared themselves needlessly: And some are apt to throw it upon them as if they counterfeited Trouble, and would have the World believe that they were more Religious than they are; as if they had a mind to get Reputation by having recourse to Ministers, and to be thought better than they were. This sometimes has an ill Effect, and discourages Persons. It was foretold of Christ, That he would Encourage and Nourish the least Beginnings. *Isai. 42. 3. A Bruised Reed shall he not break, and the smoaking Flax shall he not quench, till he bring forth Judgment unto Victory.* But these Persons that slight this Work, do quench the Spirit; they tempt others to smother Fears and Convictions that are in their Hearts; and they prejudice other Men that they don't consider their dangerous Condition as otherwise they might. Such Troubles are looked on as Rediculous, and so are Opposite.

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out of the book
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2. *By making a worldly Cry.* Ever and anon Men are making a great Cry; sometimes about some new Place; sometimes about some Commodities that are in Demand; and there is abundance of Discourse about those Things, and the Cry of the World drowns that Cry, *What shall we do to be saved.* When there is a great Cry about the World, and Men are Discourfing of that in all Companies, this ftirs up Mens worldly Affections; they are taken with the World, and they forget the Things of the other World. Worldly Discourfes have a worldly Savour upon Mens Hearts; hereby their time is taken up, and the World drinks up their Spirits. Hence they grow Heartlefs in Duties of Religion. The World is a great Enemy to Religion: They can't ferve God and Mammon. This is like cafting *Water on the fmoaking Flax.* Jam. 4. 4. *The Friendship of this World is Enmity unto God; He that will be a Friend of the World, will be an Enemy to God.*

3. *By Contention.* Sometimes Men raife fome Strife about the World; sometimes about Religion; and there is a great deal of fiding; they heat one anothers Spirits, fret and anger one another, their Discourfes
with

with those that side with them, and their Discourses with them that side against them take up a great deal of Time. They spend Hours together in such talk, and their Spirits are raised, and they reflect one upon another, and Reproach one another. This eats out the power of Godliness. They will be so engaged in Contention, that Religion will be but a Thing by the by. When their Spirits are raised, Fear is driven away. Their Thoughts are so swallowed up, that there is little room for Religion. They will be likewise great Temptations one to another. They will be more inclined to do that which will be a Provocation to God, than to do that which will bring them into a state of Reconciliation. Men that are at Strife with their Corruptions, had need have no other Strife. A Contentious Town is not like to thrive in their Religion. Jam. 3. 16. *Where Envy and Strife is, there is Confusion, and every evil Work.* Contention puts the Spirits of Men out of Frame. They that are engaged in Contention, have too much Work; they have not leasure to follow Religion to Purpose.

5 USE. *Such Sinners as live in such a Time and Place where Religion is reviving, should put in for a share. It is*

~~The benefit of the Gospel~~
208. *The benefit of the Gospel, &c,*

a Matter of Joy, to hear that others are Convicted, but much more to be Convicted your self. And it may well be expected, that you should be crying out, *Bless me also.* You should Pray David's Prayer, Psal. 106. 4, 5. *Remember me, O Lord, with the Favour that thou hearest to thy People: O visit me with thy Salvation: That I may see the good of thy Chosen, that I may Rejoyce in the Gladness of thy Nation, that I may Glory with thine Inheritance.*

Consider, 1. *There is more hopes of obtaining now.* Now there is a great Opportunity: Now God is on the giving Hand. *It is the acceptable Year of the Lord.* Luk. 4. 19. There is a great deal of Encouragement in the Providence of God. If God be about to Convert many, there is hope he may pity you among the rest. And you are under special Advantage by the Example of others, that may provoke you to Emulation. There be not such bad Examples to be a Snare to you. You should be ashamed to come behind others.

2. *It is more Dangerous to neglect now.* If Men will neglect when they have more Helps and Advantages, it is to be feared, they will neglect when they have fewer. If Men are Hard-hearted when others are terrified, what will they be when others are Hard-hearted? If Men will not be stirred up at such a time when there is less Temptation, what will they do when there is more? Jer. 12. 5. *If thou hast gone with the Footmen, and they have wearied thee, how wilt thou contend with Horses? And if in the Land of Idume wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, what wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?*

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